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Yuna

ISSUE 18 - AUGUST 2019

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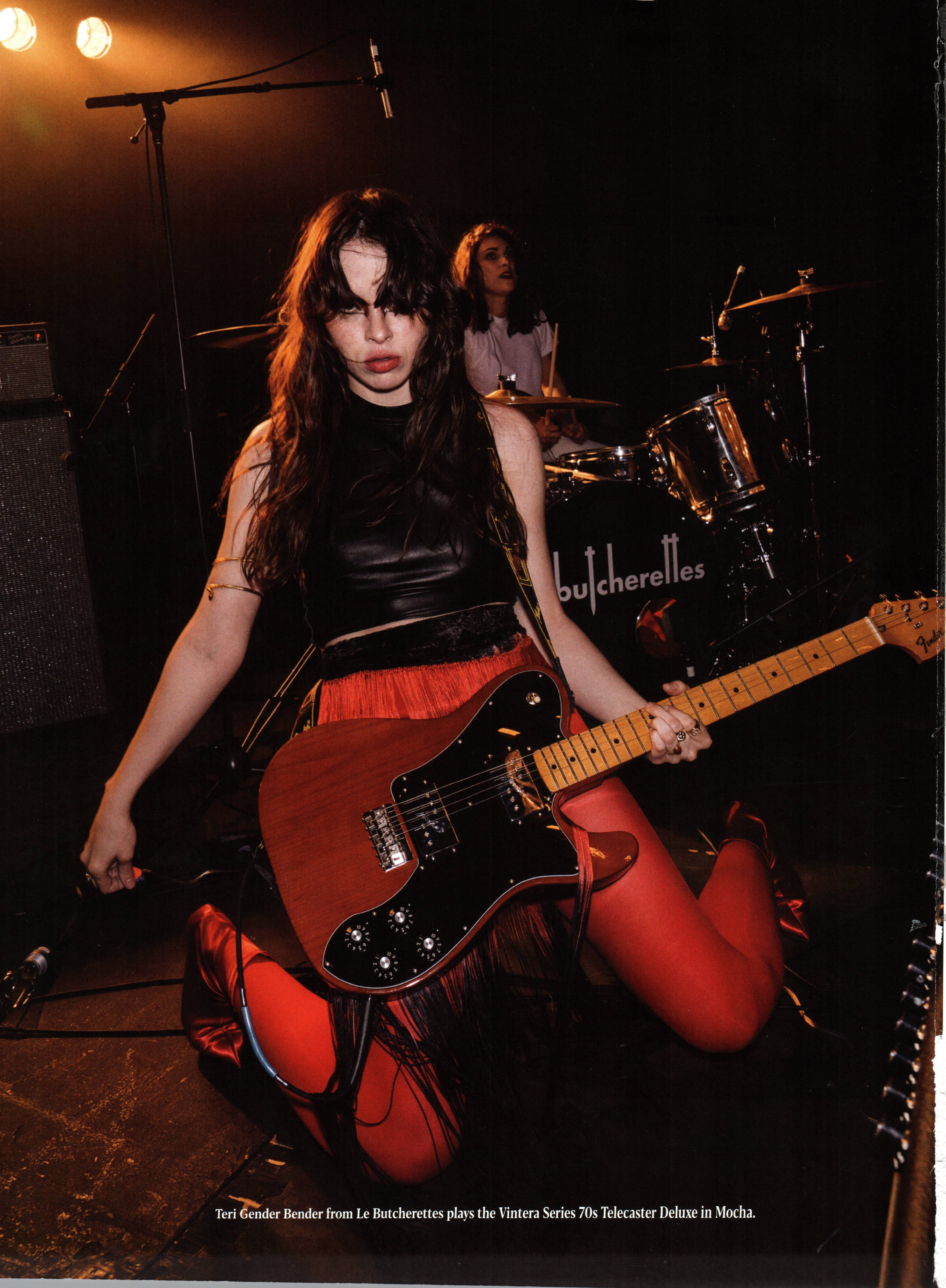
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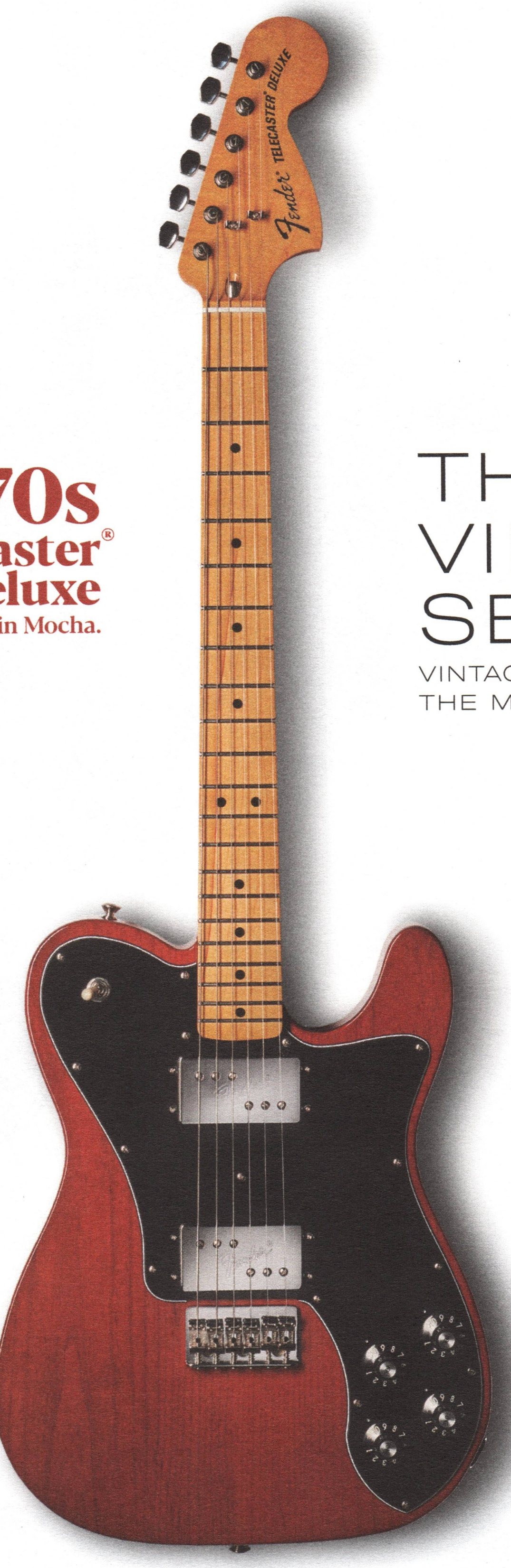

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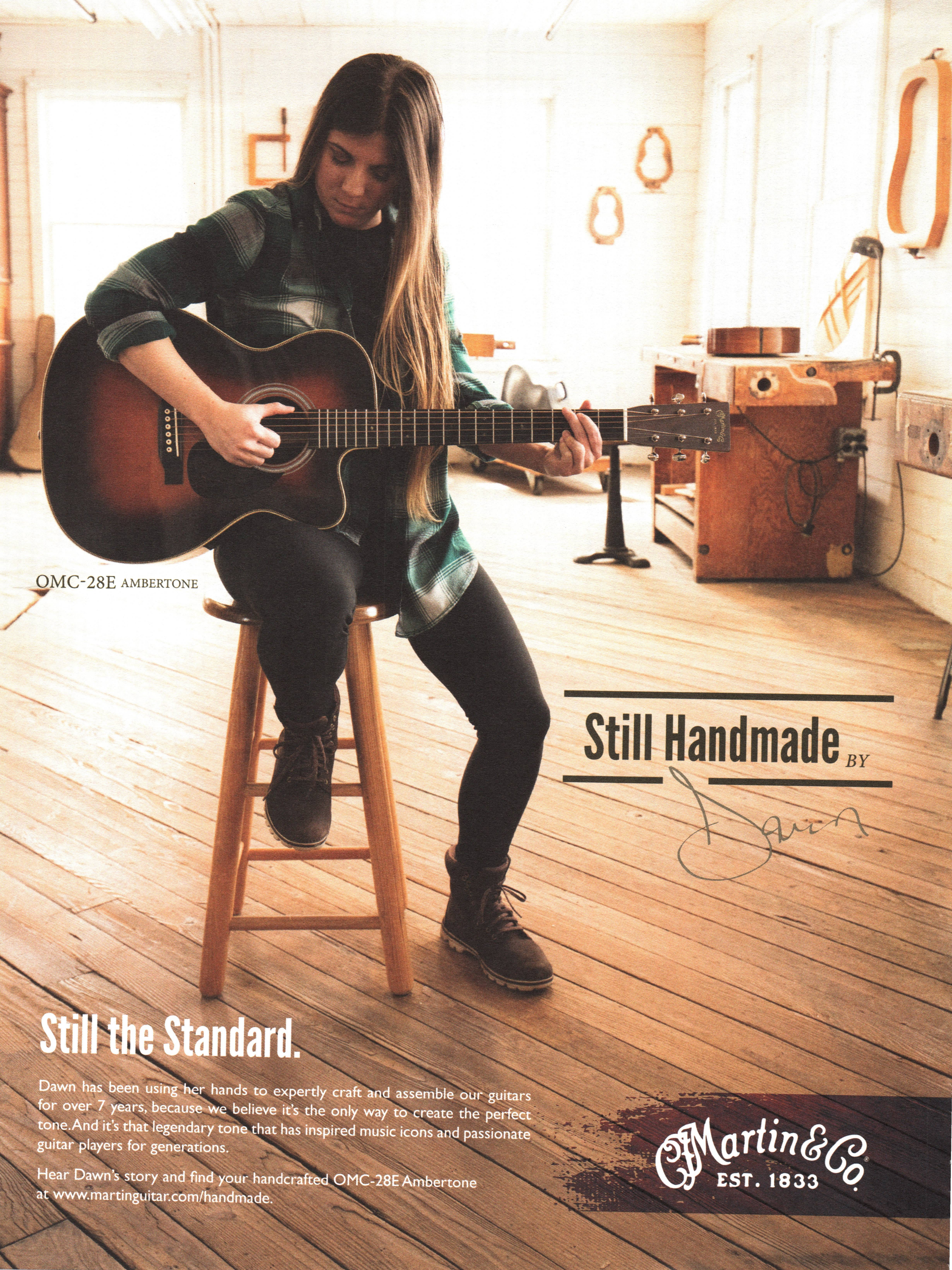

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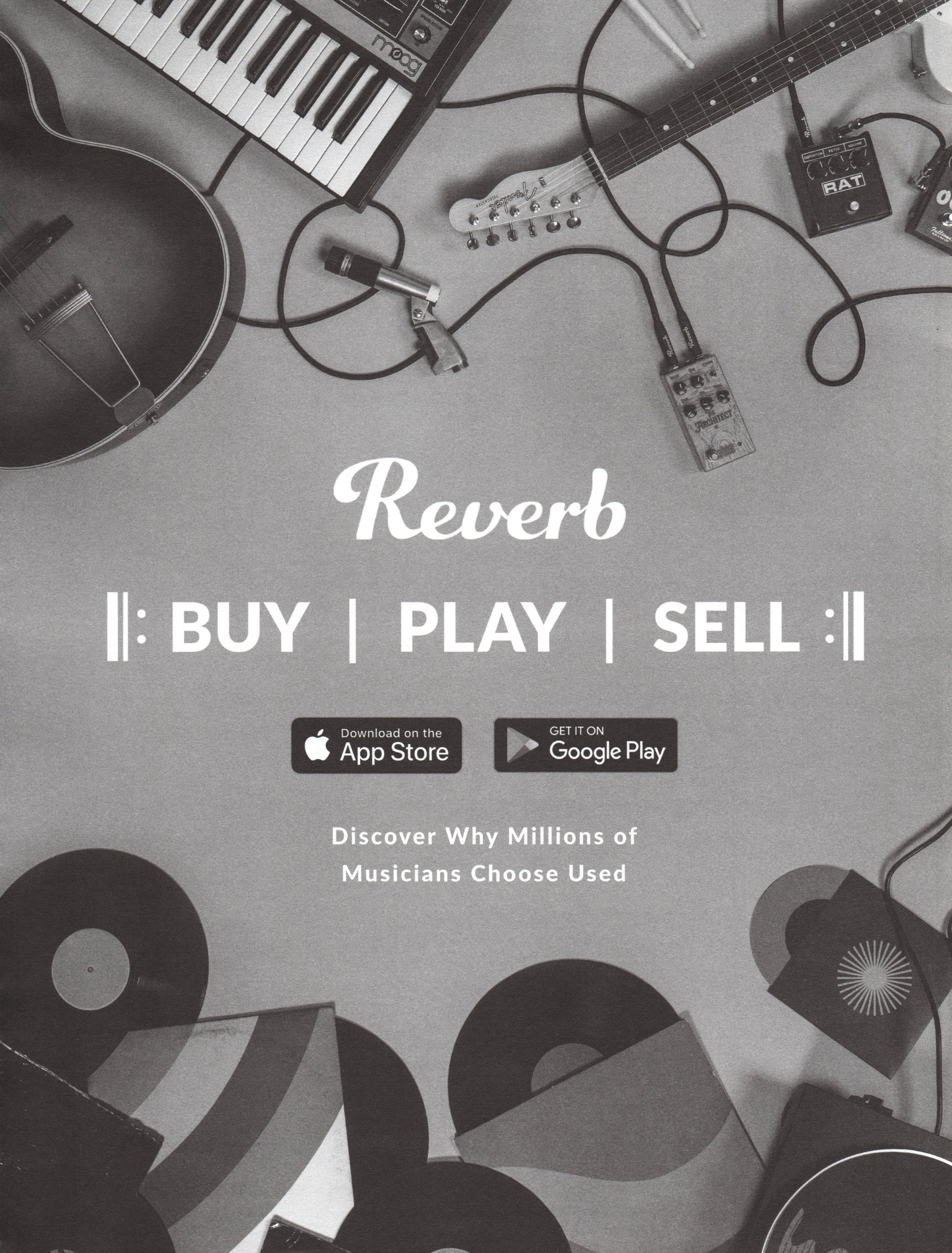
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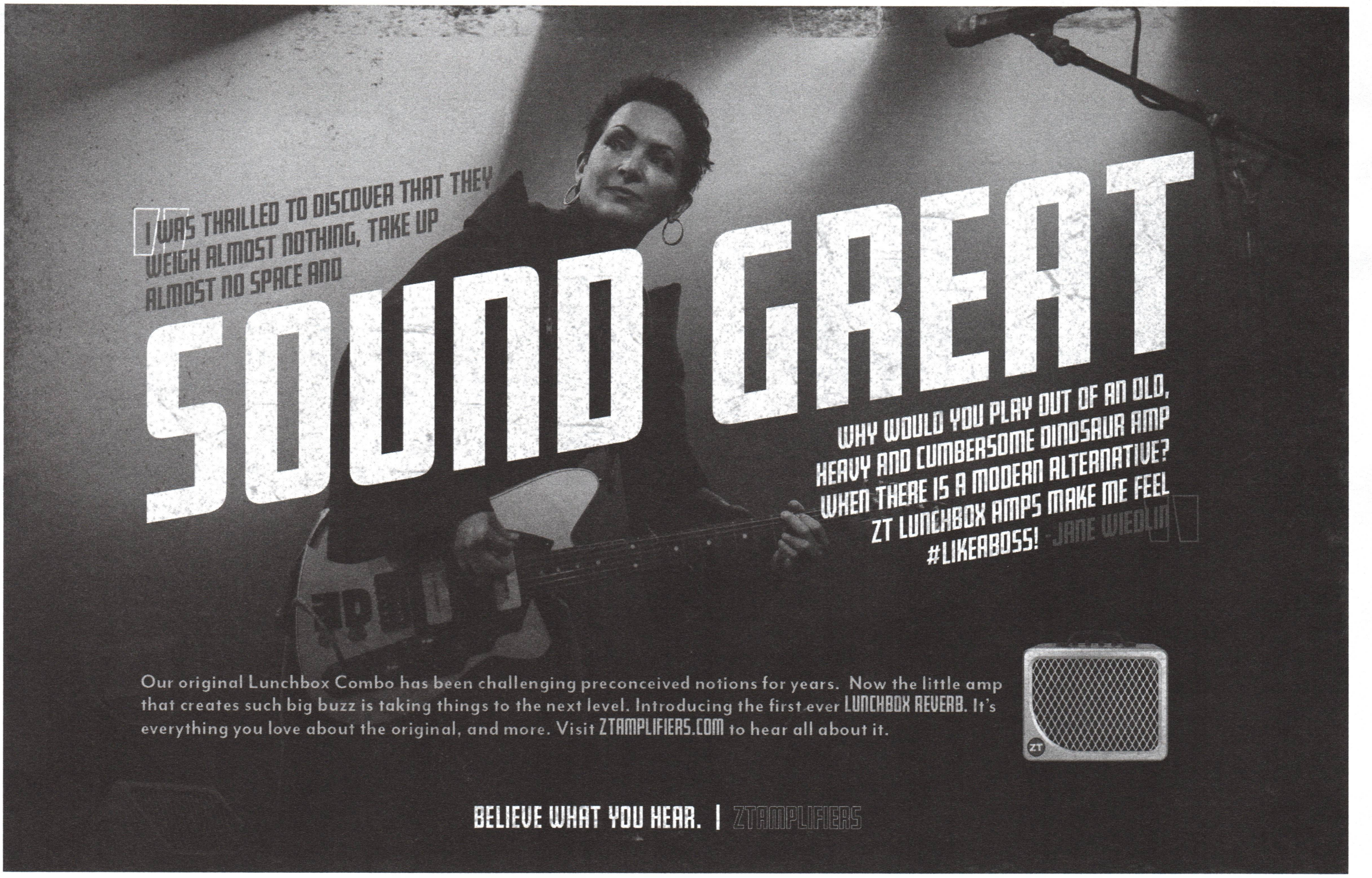
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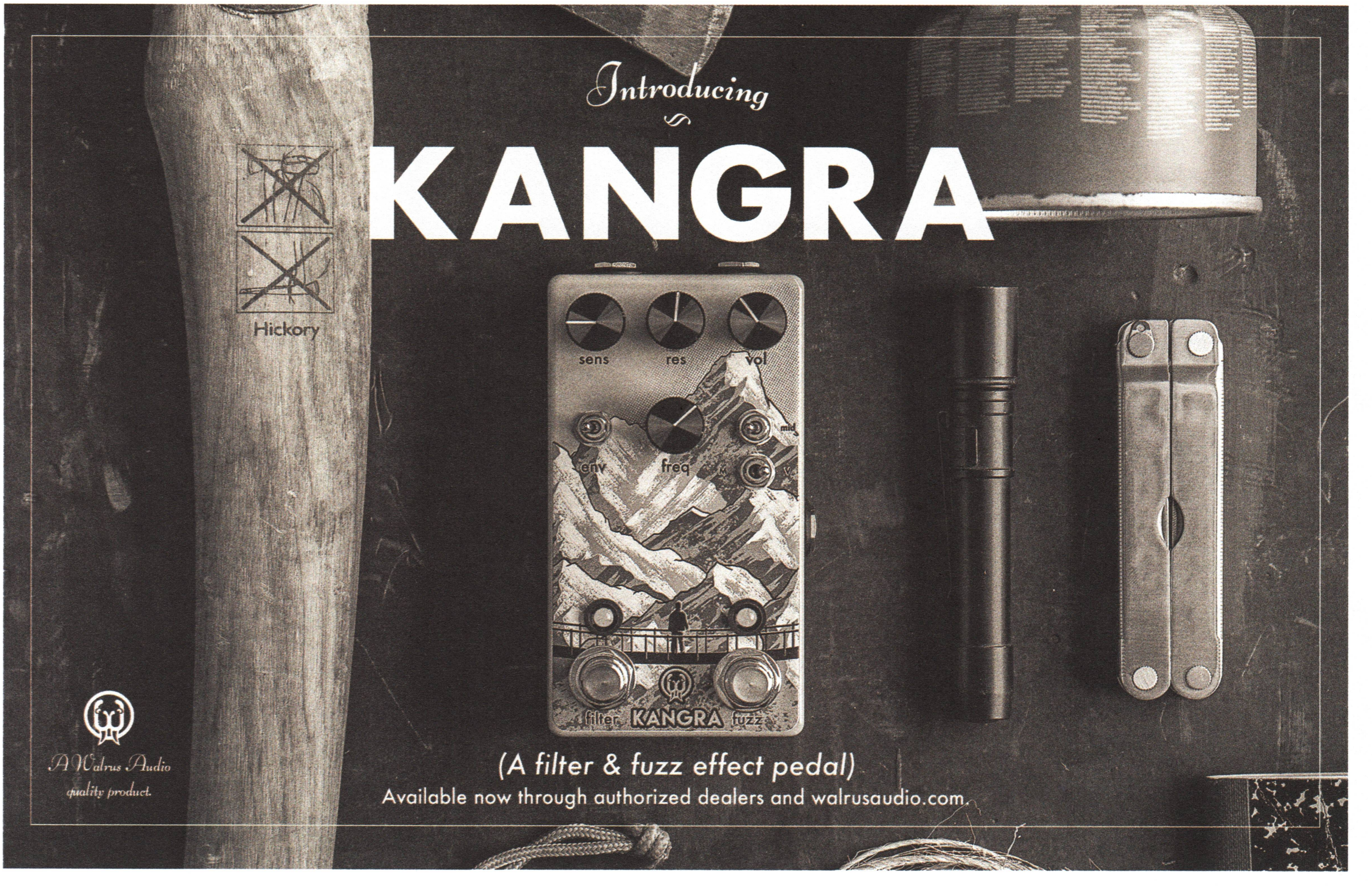
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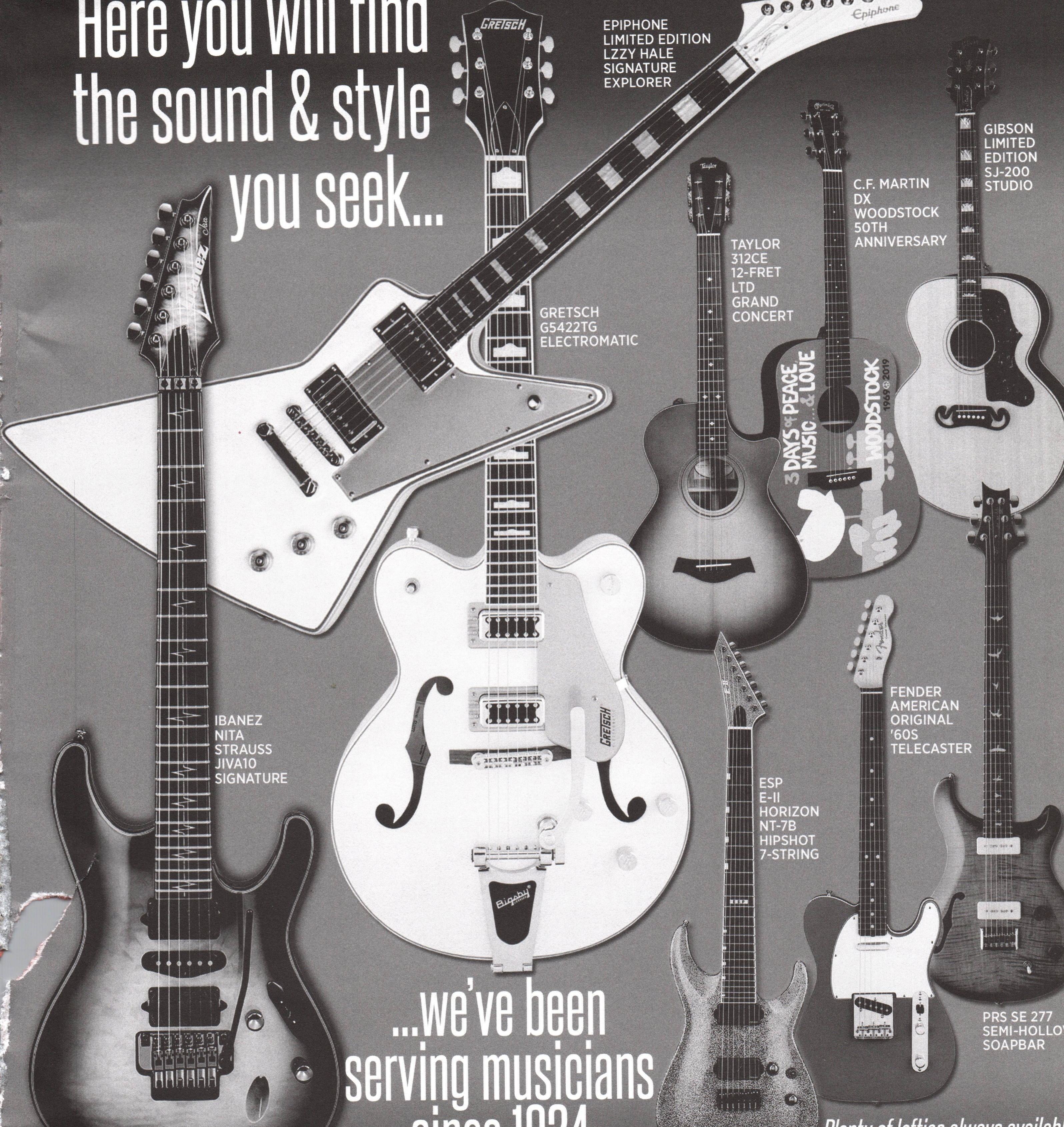
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EDITOR'S LETTER

When what we love becomes our personal means for survival, at times our source of income, it can be a challenge to remain true to ourselves. When we begin to exert the utmost energy, and perhaps capitalize on our passions, how do we keep the magic alive?

For those of us who are musicians, our work exists in the public eye. With that comes expectations and demands, which can hinder the ardor that brought us here in the first place. From being force-fed music through streaming services to the overall decrease in record sales, musicians are figuring out how to stay connected to their art rather than falling into the habit of bearing a product to be sold.

We must constantly readdress our relationship to our work. As we grow, not only within our music—from technical skills to notoriety—but also as humans in this world, our needs will naturally shift. Who we allow into our deep inner circle of vulnerability and creativity may need to be weeded and cultivated. What we created last year may not be serving us this year. How we've worked in the past may look unreasonable from where we're standing now. And how we address our needs will forever keep changing as our lives unfold.

In this issue, our featured artists elaborate on how they preserve the magic: cover artist Yuna moved from Malaysia to Los Angeles to bring her music to a new market when she began to feel stagnant and in need of a challenge; Big Thief's Adrienne Lenker learned to continue growing with the guitar amidst the industry's expectations; Bedouine speaks to her preference of playing an instrument she isn't fully versed in, and how looking at music from a beginner's perspective keeps the sparks flying; Fatoumata Diawara found an individual freedom in her band by teaching herself guitar; and Cate Le Bon taps into the unselfconscious awareness we experience as children.

Take some space today to address what's working and what's not working with your music, and how you can bring back the magic. I hope that the experiences in this issue spark a rekindling for you, and for further reading on the subject I highly recommend checking out *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron and *How To Not Always Be Working* by Marlee Grace.

Cynthia Schemmer
Managing Editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

15
SCENE REPORT
Gainesville

17
TOUR DIARY
Touring While Pregnant

23
TROPICAL MUSIC
The Rise of Women and the Guitar

27
AUDIOSCOPES
Astrology For Your Pedalboard

31
YUNA

37
ADRIENNE LENKER

43
CATE LE BON

49
BEDOUINE

55
FATOUMATA DIAWARA

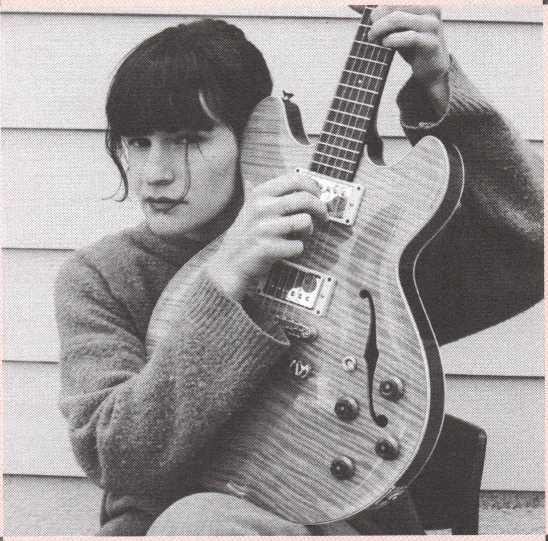
61
LESSON
The Basics of Improvisation

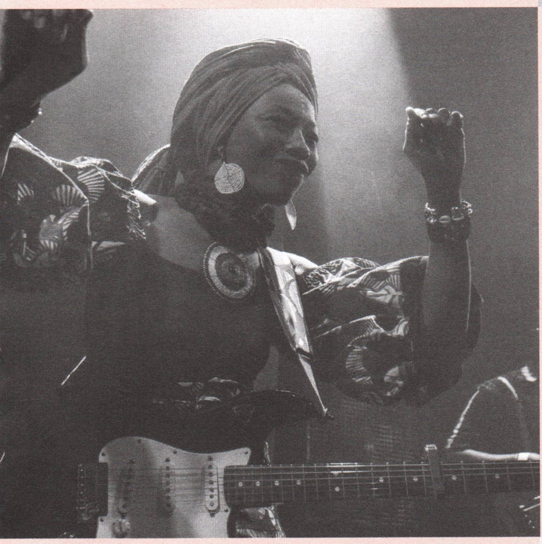
67
TABS
Yuna and G-Easy

70
GUEST EDITOR
Rachel Aggs

71
SOUND CONTROL
Sacred Paws

73
RACHEL'S TIPS AND PICKS





SCENE REPORT

Gainesville

The music scene in Gainesville, Florida is like a watering hole where indie college bands and Tom Petty-esque dad rock meet local punks. If this metaphorical dive bar had a signature drink, it might be an alcoholic slushie from Fat Daddy's (1702 W University Ave) with some absinthe and moonshine thrown in. Despite being landlocked in the middle of the state, musical tastes in Gainesville are wide-ranging, with something for everyone.

Many know Gainesville as a college town, as it's home to the University of Florida (UF), an institution whose accomplishments have included creating Gatorade in 1965 and winning national football championships with Tim Tebow. But there's much more to Gainesville that exists outside of the campus's brick buildings, making this the vibrant swamp city that it is.

Venues

The majority of Gainesville's music venues are downtown, situated between late-night Cuban eateries and cigar bars. There's a venue for every vibe, depending on if you're feeling country, fancy, or anything in between.

The Wooly (20 N Main St) has an elegant, old-fashioned feel. The bar area is separated from the stage, offering distinct experiences. The Wooly books events ranging from the celebrated Emo Night to the National Women's Liberation (Gainesville Chapter) Roe v. Wade Anniversary Show.

Heartwood Soundstage (619 S Main St) is a playground of venues, including a recording studio, an indoor stage, a large outdoor area with multiple stages, a bar, and a neighboring woodworking studio that makes the whole complex smell like a forest. It caters to diverse audiences, so if you're into African drums, French dream pop, or dab festivals, this is the place for you.

The High Dive (210 SW 2nd Ave) is exactly what its name implies: a dirty-floor emporium and a good time. The High Dive is the default venue in Gainesville, and it attracts the biggest acts including Boris, of Montreal, SALES, and the Gainesville Girls Rock Camp Showcase. The outdoor beer garden is perfect for enjoying $3 PBRs and chats with strangers.

Gear Shops

Despite the diversity in Gainesville's music scene, the city's gear shops have had a hard time keeping up. Sure, there's a Guitar Center stuffed between JOANN Fabrics and Publix, but in addition to the inventory not being very extensive, there are also several better local shops to support.

Hoggtowne Music (5200 NW 43rd St #503) advertises itself as "Gainesville's School Band Headquarters" and has been serving the city's musicians for over 20 years. The store definitely has a band camp feel, but the extensive guitar collection and online store offer options to those who prefer shredding over perfecting an embouchure.

2nd & Charles (2601 NW 13th St #2601) stocks a wide range of offerings, from guitars and drums to books, vinyl, DVDs, and rubber animal masks. This everything store sells new and used merchandise, and their back wall is devoted to acoustic and electric guitars as well as drum kits. And although they don't sell any basses, they do have used banjos for $200.

Great Southern Music (6787 W Newberry Rd) is your traditional instrument store with sweet deals on leasing and rent-to-own instruments. They offer instrument repairs, as well as premier music lessons that are often taught by professors or PhD students at UF.

TEXT - MACKENZIE PATEL

Record Stores

Any dedicated Gainesville music fan makes the trip downtown at least once a week to peruse our two major record stores. The walk from one to the other is only five minutes, and it's worth checking out both for their drastically different offerings. Other random shops sell vinyl records (i.e. Books-a-Million, Goodwill), but the two below are run by local experts in the industry.

Hear Again Records (201 SE 1 St) occupies a tiny space, but their logo, featuring a family portrait with records for heads, is recognizable on stickers, t-shirts, and slipmats all over the city. Their constant inventory turnover (and livestream Facebook updates) is likely to bring Bikini Kill reissues one week and The Coathangers another.

At **Arrow's Aim Records (10 N Main St)**, the used CD collection is a cabinet of curiosities, where the used records are mixed in with the new—so there's the thrill of discovering Weyes Blood on blue vinyl or a $5 used Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Other Things

For being a swampland, Gainesville has a surprising variety of music festivals and house shows. Heartwood Soundstage puts on their annual Heartwood Festival with acts ranging from college bands to folk music and jam bands. They also experiment with the double recording of live shows, so both the performers and audience can experience the differences or similarities, as with Pearl & The Oyster's set this past February. The Parisian-turned-Flordian band captivated audiences with their sultry vocals and hypnotic jazz flute—and you could experience the spell twice with the recordings of two performances of the exact same set list.

Connected with Heartwood Soundstage is **Swamp Records**, the student-run record label of UF. A hotbed of future talent, Swamp Records supports four to five bands with graphic design, booking, PR, social media, and artist-reveal house shows.

The **Civic Media Center** is a downtown tour-de-force that concentrates on activism, curating the largest zine collection in the Southeast U.S., and hosting orgasmic poetry jams in one funky, tattered building. They often champion issues such as labor disputes, incarceration, and black feminism through live music and weekly workshops.

Changeville is a weekend music and arts festival that takes place at a variety of local venues throughout Gainesville. Curated with musicians and experiences that advocate for social change, a portion of the proceeds of Changeville are donated to local charities. Previous acts have included Princess Nokia, Japanese Breakfast, Laura Stevenson, and Big Freedia.

Craft Beer

Don't let the crushed cans of Natty Light and PBR lining frat row fool you—Gainesville's palate for craft beer is sophisticated, and it's only getting more particular. Local breweries offer rich beers and relaxed atmospheres, and you're likely to find even the most niche beers at downtown bodega Pop-a-Top and mega grocery store chains alike.

Swamp Head Brewery (3650 SW 42 Ave) has the highest quality craft beer in all of Gainesville. Located in the warehouse district, their brewery is literally in the wetlands, just outside of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Year-round drinks include Midnight Oil Oatmeal Coffee Stout, Big Nose IPA, and Stump Knocker Pale Ale. Swamp Head also offers special release beers, including the Reef Patrol Caribbean-style lager, of which a portion of the proceeds are donated to organizations protecting Florida's shark population.

First Magnitude Brewery (1220 SE Veitch St) dominates the industrial side of downtown Gainesville with their sprawling indoor and outdoor complex. Children can busy themselves in the playground while parents knock back Vega Blonde Ales and Ursa IPAs. First Magnitude also hosts events including meetups, trivia, brewery yoga, and more.

Big Top Brewing (201 SE 2nd Ave #101) is the newest brewery to hit the streets of (surprise, surprise) downtown. Big Top Brewing was founded in Sarasota, FL, but the Gainesville location brings a welcome addition to the local brewery scene. If you want a central location for happy hour, this is the brewery to stop at.

Coffee Shops

Gainesville worships coffee after beer, and the city's coffee culture is celebrated widely and with niche aesthetics. Whether you're looking for a place that feels particularly smart, grungy, or Christian, Gainesville's coffeehouses can hook you up.

Wyatt's Coffee (202 SE 2nd Ave) is featured on way too many Instagram pages, but there's something about that stylized "W" logo that reels in both locals and newcomers alike. Wyatt's makes specialized drinks such as turmeric ginger tea and beetroot lattes, in addition to selling beer, wine, and regular coffees.

Volta Coffee (48 SW 2nd St) is tucked away downtown, but it's only a few steps from some of the most vibrant murals in the city. The tea is prepared intricately with a timer and a mesh steeper, there's comfortable air-conditioning, and outside is a bike rental kiosk so you can coast to Depot Park with an iced latte.

Pascal's Coffeehouse (112 NW 16th St) is across from the campus library and prides itself on being a Christian Study Center (a noticeable juxtaposition to all of the midtown clubs and bars on the same road). Although their coffee choices are limited, the two floors of couches, wooden tables, and bright windows make it the perfect place for studying.

TOUR DIARY

SHREDDING FOR TWO

TEXT - SHANA CLEVELAND

PHOTOS - KRIS LORI

TOURING WHILE PREGNANT

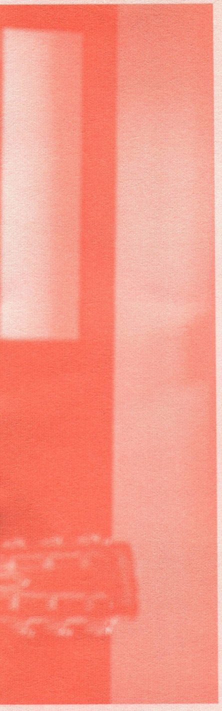
Last fall, shortly after returning from a long tour in Europe with my band La Luz, I was at a farmer's market with my mom and my boyfriend Will. While perusing the stalls, it dawned on me that my period was due, and here I was traipsing around town in white pants like a fool. I ran for the nearest bathroom and, relieved to find no signs of blood, went about my day. Later that evening, I started to do the math and realized I was actually several days late, so I dug through my closet for a pregnancy test I bought at a dollar store in Los Angeles a few months back.

VOILA! TOTALLY PREGNANT.

While it wasn't something we'd planned, Will and I quickly found that we were both stoked by the idea of starting a family and decided to go for it. A year earlier we had left LA, the latest in a series of cities we had inhabited together and separately, and moved to a little house down a dirt road in a small gold rush town. Since both of us spend much of our time touring, we figured it would be nice to come home to somewhere quiet and wild where the stars aren't diminished by city lights. We both recognized immediately that our little piece of California wilderness would be the perfect place to raise a child.

And then the questions began. The cool thing about pregnancy is that since so many people have done it before, there are endless resources to help navigate its many mysteries. Through countless internet searches and checking out a couple of good books, I was able to figure out what I should and shouldn't eat, what a wide array of physical and mental changes I could expect during any given week, and how to formulate a plan for prenatal care. But what the internet and every pregnancy book ever written couldn't help me decide was what I was supposed to do about touring. There was a 10-day West Coast tour due to start in a few weeks with my band La Luz, and a few shorter tours in Canada, the Midwest, and Southern California scheduled during what would be my second trimester. I was also in the early stages of planning tours around the release of my solo album, *Night of the Worm Moon*, when I would be well into my third trimester.

My parents are both musicians, and though they rarely played outside of our little corner of southwest Michigan during my childhood, I grew up hearing stories of their travels all around America's watering holes. My dad was living in Texas and on tour through Michigan with a Western swing band when he met my mom, a tall girl in a long skirt and a short afro who came out to dance. Over the next couple of years, my mom moved to Colorado and my dad joined a band in Tucson. They would make a point of crossing paths whenever time or my dad's tour schedule allowed, until eventually they moved back to Michigan together. In Saginaw, my dad was in a nine-piece soul band and my mom started running sound to pull her weight on tour, adding backup vocals from her position behind the soundboard until eventually joining the band on stage as a full-fledged member. The story they've always told me is that when my mom got pregnant, they figured it was time to get full-time jobs and put music on the backburner. My mom drove a city bus and my dad became a maintenance man at an apartment complex—a job that, in addition to a steady income, provided free housing and healthcare. They both kept



playing in bands, but once I was in the picture, their carefree days of traveling around chasing gigs were replaced by a new static lifestyle that seemed more fitting to the decorum expected of new parents.

The beginning of my story with Will isn't a whole lot different than that of my parents. We met on tour and ran into each other at different points through our separate travels before deciding to move in with each other and spend as much time together as we possibly could within the constrictions of our separate meandering paths. Unlike my parents, neither of us can imagine quitting life on the road in favor of the relative stability of a full-time job. So it blew my mind when I first started telling friends I was pregnant and a common response was, What's going to happen to your band? or "Are you still going to tour?" Or, most maddeningly, "Are you still going to do music stuff?" Why would I suddenly change the whole course of my life and give up on doing what I love? Would they ask these kinds of questions to a man?

When I was offered a tour that would end around my 35th week (pregnancy typically lasts 40 weeks), I searched for advice from other musicians who have toured pregnant. I was surprised when I couldn't find very much. It goes without saying that each pregnancy is different, and if you're suffering from complications, staying close to home and your regular doctor might make the most sense. But in the interest of demystifying the experience for anyone out there who is pregnant or considering the idea and wants to keep touring, I decided to put together a little guide of some simple things that helped me stay comfortable through the unique challenges of touring throughout my pregnancy.

I hope some of these tips prove helpful if you decide to continue touring during any part of your pregnancy. In the end, no one else can tell you how to go about this journey. Listen to your body and trust what feels best for you. I realize that sounds a little woo-woo, but what better time to relax and trust your body than when it's actually in the process of creating life? Also, there's no shame in asking for help when it comes to loading gear. Only do what feels comfortable to you.

Amidst all the uncertainty, as my body morphed around this new human, I was comforted by my inclination that navigating the extreme highs and lows of life as a touring musician is excellent preparation for parenthood. I've broken down in the desert, suffered debilitating illness halfway across the globe, been laughed off stage after baring my soul for a handful of drunk strangers as the opener for a crust-punk puppetshow, and who knows, I could be woefully unprepared for the challenges of motherhood. But I've got one thing going for me: I'm ready for anything and I'm totally unafraid. That's a mindset I would be proud to teach my son.

Check out Shana's latest album, *Night of the Worm Moon*, released April 2019 on Hardly Art Records!

SLEEP

GOOD SLEEP WILL BE OF EXTRA IMPORTANCE BECAUSE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM IS WEAKER WHILE YOU'RE PREGNANT. I FOUND IT HELPFUL TO TAKE A QUICK REST IN THE CAR OR BACKSTAGE SOME DAYS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE FIRST AND THIRD TRIMESTERS.

Get in a little exercise each day. This will help you to sleep soundly between all those inevitable journeys feeling around a strange room in the dark, trying to find the bathroom. Have a few quick stretches in your arsenal that you can easily do right before bed or in the morning since these may be the only times during the day when you're likely to be in a clean, comfortable spot. I also fell into a routine of going for a walk everyday after sound check. Some days were easy, and on others I felt like I was dragging my giant gut around, but I always felt pretty good afterward.

Bring along earplugs and an eye mask. Even if you're in one of those green rooms that seems to be located right between two equally blaring stages, creating a heinous cocktail of unignorable noise, you might still be able to get in a little nap before your set.

A pregnancy pillow can be really helpful. I had pretty bad hip pain through my pregnancy, but when a friend gave me their fancy hand-me-down pillow, it was pretty miraculous. It made sleeping so much easier and more comfortable that when I forgot my pillow at a hotel in Canada, I ran out and bought a new one the next day. If you don't want to throw down for one of the big body pillows, tucking a couple of small pillows between your legs may be enough to do the trick.

I'm not sure when it began, but at some point during my pregnancy I became the dreaded tour snorer. If this happens to you, just blame it on pregnancy hormones causing the mucus membranes in your nose to swell—and threaten to go into greater detail if anyone's got anymore complaints.

DRIVING

THE ONE BIT OF ADVICE MY DOCTOR GAVE ME ABOUT TOURING WAS TO MAKE SURE TO STOP TO WALK AROUND AND STRETCH MY LEGS EVERY HOUR OR TWO. YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THIS AT ALL SINCE YOU'LL LIKELY HAVE TO PEE CONSTANTLY, BUT JUST IN CASE, AND BECAUSE YOU SHOULD BE DOING THIS ANYWAY, DRINK TONS OF WATER DURING THE DRIVES. WHEN PREGNANT, YOU'RE AT A HIGHER RISK FOR DEVELOPING BLOOD CLOTS IF YOU SIT AROUND FOR TOO LONG, SO YOU'LL WANT TO PLAN ON A LITTLE EXTRA TIME FOR EACH DRIVE TO ALLOW FOR SOME AWKWARD PACING AROUND TRUCK STOPS AND REST AREAS AT EVEY OPPORTUNITY.

FOOD

KEEPING UP WITH ALL OF THE DIETARY RESTRICTIONS AND NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF PREGNANCY IS TRICKY ENOUGH AT HOME, AND SO DOING IT RIGHT ON THE ROAD FELT EXTRA CHALLENGING. AND THEN THERE'S ALL THOSE LONG STRETCHES OF THE FREEWAY WHERE THE ONLY OPTION IS FAST FOOD.

Avoid overeating. Scarfing down too much in one sitting can cause heartburn and generally make you feel like an over-inflated balloon for hours on end. This becomes particularly true in the second and third trimesters, when your stomach and intestines are all squished and pushed aside to make room for the baby, and your digestion slows way down.

Have some healthy snacks around at all times. This is a good way to avoid overdoing it when meal time comes. Keep a small cooler stocked with things like baby carrots, string cheese, and yogurt. Nuts, fruit, and pb&j supplies are easy unrefrigerated options.

Another dollar store find that really came in handy was a little plastic pill divider. If your prenatal vitamins are more than one-a-day, these can be really helpful for keeping track of what you've taken.

Oatmeal is a magic food for pregnancy. It's healthy and full of fiber, which will help stave off the constipation that commonly results from pregnancy hormones and all the pressure your growing uterus puts on your intestines. Here's a recipe from a doctor friend that I altered a bit to suit my taste, and whipped up a big batch to take on tour. It's great because you can just throw some in a mug and add hot water, which you can usually find next to the coffee machines at any gas station.

ROAD OATS

- 5 CUPS ROLLED OATS (I USED QUICK OATS)
- 1 CUP OAT BRAN
- 1 CUP CHOPPED DRIED FRUIT
- 1 CUP SUNFLOWER SEEDS
- 1 CUP RAW, UNSALTED NUTS, CHOPPED
- 1/2 CUP UNSWEETENED SHREDDED COCONUT
- 1 CUP GROUND FLAXSEEDS
- 2 tbs CINNAMON

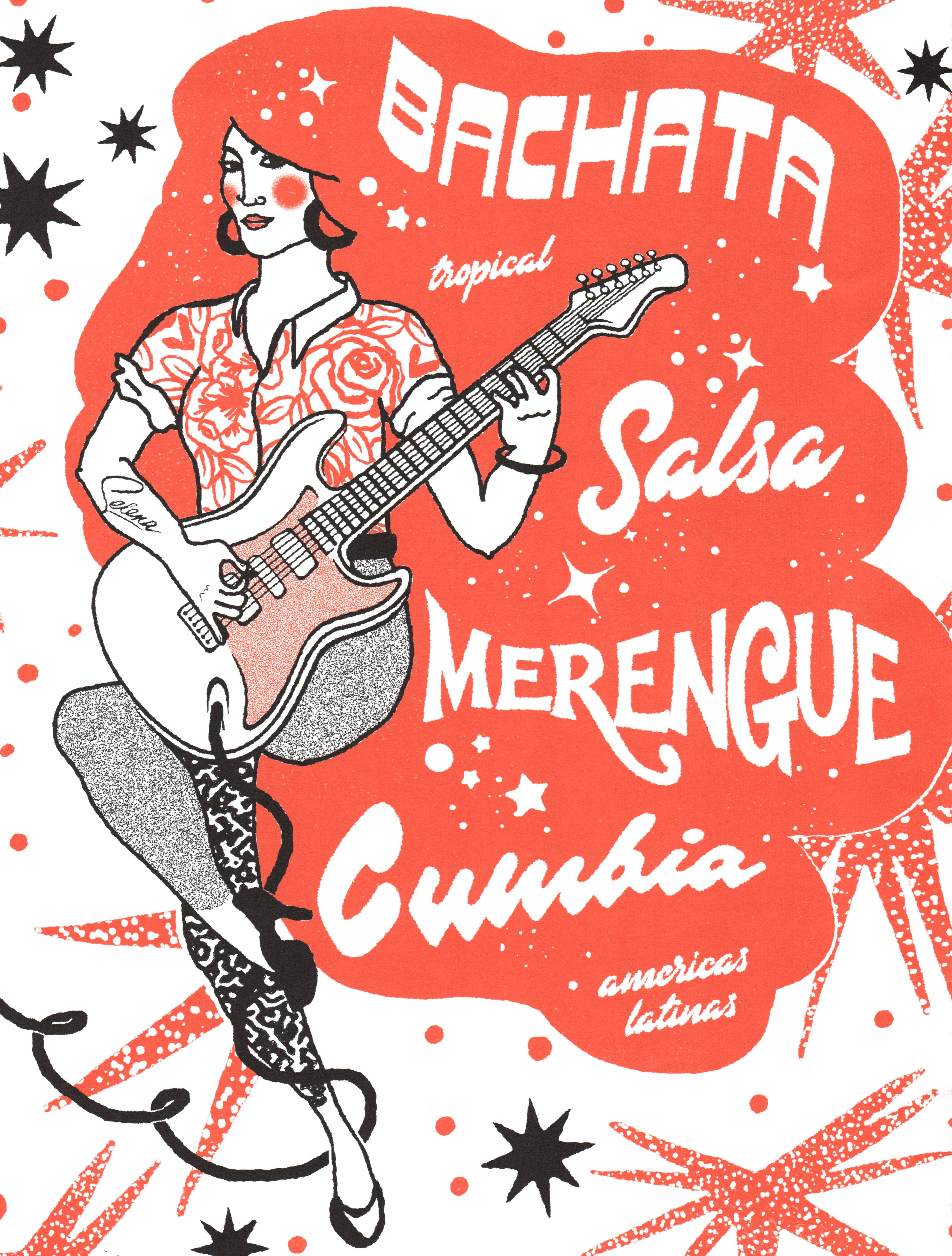
FAVORITE RESOURCES

SPIRITUAL MIDWIFERY
By Ina May

INA MAY'S GUIDE TO CHILDBIRTH
By Ina May

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING
By Heidi Murkoff and
Sharon Mazel

WWW.WHATTOEXPECT.COM


BACHATA
tropical
Salsa
MERENGUE
Cumbia
americas latinas
Selena

TEXT - STEPHANIE MENDEZ **ILLUSTRATIONS - LA VIEJA FLORES**

TROPICAL MUSIC

The Rise of Women Instrumentalists and the Guitar

Looking into the progressions of tropical genres like cumbia, merengue, salsa, and bachata, women instrumentalists have often been excluded. And while women and non-binary artists are making great contemporary strides, the work of today's musicians can be best appreciated within a more accurate context and lineage than has often been remembered.

"I don't think there's any music industry or instrument that hasn't been male-dominated," says Dr. Sydney Hutchinson, associate professor of ethnomusicology at Syracuse University. "That's the way it's been everywhere, so Latin America is no exception." According to Dr. Hutchinson, this historical lack of inclusion in tropical genres is even more prominent for women who played instruments: "Women were mostly involved as singers and dancers, so the question is, when did women start playing instruments? There are a few different places one could point to where women have been more involved in playing instruments, and in most cases, that's happened fairly recently in the last few decades."

Dr. Hutchinson is a salsa and merengue musician who has been researching and studying Latin American and Caribbean music for over 20 years. In 2016, she examined the legacy of regional women and queer musicians in a book she wrote called, *Tigers of a Different Stripe: Performing Gender in Dominican Music.* "In the Dominican Republic, where I did my research, I found that women have always been playing accordion, for as far as I could look back," says Dr. Hutchinson. "But a lot of times, it was hidden from view because they did so much more at home than on stage, and that makes you wonder if that's actually happening in a lot of places. Maybe women are playing instruments, but you don't see them doing it, because they're not on a stage."

Tropical genres differentiate from one another based on rhythm, dance types, and distinct instruments, explains Dr. Hutchinson. Most merengue formats require a tambora drum and güira scraper, while salsa includes a horn section, piano, congas, and timbales. Cumbia played by vallenato groups will feature accordion, a caja drum, and a guacharaca, while cumbia performed by norteño or Tejano groups will have bajo sexto, bass, saxophone, and a drum set.

While guitar tends to be a commonly used instrument in many genres, it's not a mainstay of most tropical music, and according to Dr. Hutchinson, it hasn't been typically used in the past for merengue, cumbia, salsa, and other styles. Guitar is more frequently used in bachata, though historically the genre has not been very welcoming to women. "It was mostly a [genre] that men would sing and listen to when they went to red light district type of places and very low class bars," says Dr. Hutchinson. "Traditionally, [bachata] was mostly about feeling bitter. And why were they bitter? Because their woman had cheated on them." Additionally, Dr. Hutchinson says that women were not frequenting the spaces where men were often listening to bachata, and despite the introduction of "romantic" bachata in the last 20 years, overall, the genre has not treated women very well.

When it comes to the legacy of women as instrumentalists under the tropical umbrella, one of the most famous groups to consider is Las Chicas del Can, founded in 1981 in the Dominican Republic. "It was the first and only-to-date all-female merengue group. It was definitely a landmark to have women playing these instruments at a high level, and have them on stage," says Dr. Hutchinson.

Cecy Treviño, founder of the Corpus Christi, Texas-based Chicas Rock Music Camp and bassist in Master Blaster Sound System, says Las Chicas del Can have been influential beyond their place in merengue. "In the 1980s, they were the only female group [in the Dominican Republic], and had to fight the stereotypes of a male-dominated market," says Treviño. "That wasn't much different for us in the early 2000s. There was the idea that women could not reach the same level of skill as men. That didn't stop them, and it didn't stop us."

Las Chicas
del Can

Treviño is based in Corpus Christi, but is originally from Reynosa, Mexico. She first began playing guitar and bass when she was 12 years old, and has been performing in mainly cumbia-based genres. Despite being active in music since adolescence, she says there were few women instrumentalists that she was exposed to from an early age. She especially did not see many women cumbia musicians represented. "You would hear of female singers like Selena—she has been a big influence and helped open the doors for a lot of us—but very rarely female musicians," Treviño says. "Nowadays, there are more female musicians and producers. It's very inspiring."

Electric guitar has since become a contemporary instrument of choice within tropical genres, specifically in cumbia. And Treviño is certainly one of many women torchbearers in this modern legacy. As a seasoned musician, Treviño has performed in numerous bands over the years, including Vestido, The Knockouts, and La Conquista, the latter of which garnered a lot of recognition as a cumbia-rock hybrid. "In the beginning of 2000, we got a record deal in Monterrey, Mexico with La Conquista," she says. "We were the only all-girl cumbia band at the time and played numerous concerts. In 2003, we came to Corpus Christi to record with Abraham Quintanilla, Selena's dad, and have stayed in Corpus since."

La Conquista recorded five albums under Quintanilla and Q-Zone Records, and even had the opportunity to tour with Kumbia Kings, Treviño recalled. Presently, she plays in Master Blaster Sound System with her husband, DJ Dusty, where she fuses multiple tropical genres to create a unique sound. "It's a mix of electronic sounds and samples with live instruments," she says. "We get inspired by styles like vallenato, cumbia villera, cumbia grupera, and tropical sounds like chicha, to name a few. We call the style 'cumbia crunk' because when we play people go crazy, dancing all night. It's the most fun ever."

Other modern artists and bands led by women on guitar that have pushed tropical genres in new directions include Sarah Solo, Tropi Corillo, Reyna Tropical, Kumbia Queers, La Santa Cecilia, and Viento Callejero, to name a few. This evolution of cumbia comes as no surprise, and according to Dr. Hutchinson, the influence of cumbia has been more widespread compared to other tropical genres: "Although it came from Colombia originally, it spread all throughout Latin America fast and became really popular and fully rooted in many places, so that there's now Northern Mexican cumbia, there's Peruvian cumbia, and there's even different kinds of groups [within Colombia] that play cumbia."

Gloria Estrada, who plays guitar and founded both Viento Callejero and Latin Grammy-nominated group La Santa Cecilia, first started playing when she was 14 years old at Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles. As a young teenager, Estrada always felt connected and drawn to cumbia, even as a guitar player. "Growing up, what party doesn't have cumbia music? What quinceañera, what backyard party or event, especially in the Latin neighborhood or household? You start gravitating towards it so quickly, and as I was touring and playing a lot with multiple bands throughout the years, cumbia music was the one style that got people dancing right away. "That's why I wanted to experiment in a band where we focused on cumbia," she says.

As Estrada continued to study and play guitar—eventually earning a Master's Degree in studio jazz guitar at the University of Southern California—her passion for cumbia never faltered. While she was in La Santa Cecilia, the band garnered tremendous recognition, and their music went on to be featured in television shows like *Weeds* and *Entourage*. After La Santa Cecilia, Estrada took an unorthodox approach with cumbia-based band Viento Callejero, which is led by her guitar.

"I couldn't afford a 12-piece big band, so I did a lot of call and response with the guitar lines, and going from low frequencies to high frequencies, or having the bass player do a call and response with me, kind of like what those old songs used to do," she says. "And throughout that process, we developed our own style."

Like Treviño, as a young person in music, Estrada didn't see many women instrumentalists in the genre, particularly guitarists or bassists, but she inevitably found inspiration from old-school cumbia acts that incorporate the guitar. "Bands like Los Mirlos or Juaneco y su Combo, and that style of guitar, made the guitar the dominant instrument, whereas before it was the gaita or the accordion. Now, the guitar was at the forefront and leading the sound, so I really love that and tried to create this group where it could fuse all this," Estrada says.

Today, when Viento Callejero drops new singles and music videos, Estrada feels proud of women's achievements as guitarists in the contemporary tropical scene. "Part of why it took me so long to realize I was going to be a guitarist was because I didn't really see that growing up," she says. Now, she is all the more appreciative to see an increasing number of role models for young people interested in these genres. "Seeing so many women, young ladies, and kids pursuing music and shredding is such a beautiful thing."

TEXT - C. TEDDY THOMPSON

ILLUSTRATIONS - PATERSON HODGSON

AUDIOSCOPES

Astrology for your Pedalboard

Astrology has been used for thousands of years to enrich and guide our lives—and similarly, so has music. The way we express ourselves conveys the kind of people we are, and the pedals we choose illuminate our unique, magnificent songs. Each effects pedal has its own frequency that produces a specific sound, and so naturally, as musicians, we choose pedals with frequencies that correspond with our own personal energies.

We asked over 40 musicians for their astrological signs and their favorite guitar pedals, and with some research and reflection, picked a pedal that we felt connected to each sign—that seemed to exist on the same wavelength. Use these Audioscopes in whatever way works for you: read your sun sign (which represents your spirit and personality), rising sign (the way the world sees you), moon sign (your emotions and inner mood), and any other placements. Experiment with your sound and what you put into the universe!

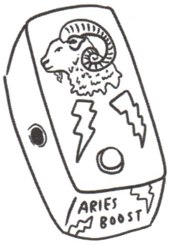
ARIES

MARCH 21 - APRIL 19

The Ram

~

Boost



LIKE A TRUE ARIES, THE BOOST PEDAL IS THE LOUDEST ONE IN THE ROOM—WHEN NECESSARY. A BOOST PEDAL TAKES THE SIGNAL FROM YOUR GUITAR AND BOOSTS ITS VOLUME ABOVE AND BEYOND. IT WON'T TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR TONE OR ADD DISTORTION; THE FUNCTION IS VERY SIMPLE, BUT NOT SUBTLE. THE PURPOSE IS DIRECT AND TO THE POINT, TAKING YOUR SOUND FROM A 10 TO 20. SIMILARLY, FIREY AND IMPULSIVE ARIES IS KNOWN AS THE SPARK THAT IGNITES THE WHEEL OF SIGNS.

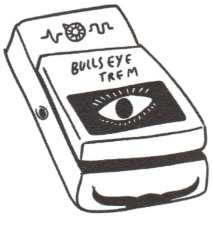
TAURUS

APRIL 20 - MAY 20

The Bull

~

Tremolo



THIS PRACTICAL AND INDULGENT SIGN LIVES FOR ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT PLEASES THE SENSES AND ELEVATES THEIR SURROUNDINGS. RELATEDLY, THE TREMOLO IS SIMPLE IN FUNCTION, ADDING A RIPPLING EFFECT TO YOUR GUITAR TONE BY RAPIDLY DROPPING AND PICKING UP THE VOLUME LEVEL IN THE SIGNAL. IT GIVES YOUR SOUND A LAID BACK, NOSTALGIC FEEL AND IS COMMONLY FOUND IN SURF AND COUNTRY MUSIC. THIS UNCOMPLICATED PEDAL CAN TRANSPORT YOU TO PARADISE WITHOUT GIVING UP COMFORT OR SECURITY.

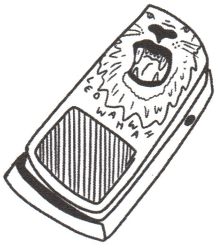
LEO

JULY 23 - AUG 22

The Lion

~

Wah-Wah



THE LION IS PASSIONATE, AS WELL AS NOTHING SHY OF EXTRAVAGANT. THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN, AND TO MAKE YOU REMEMBER THEM. WAH-WAH IS A DISTINCTIVE AND BOLD PEDAL, MAKING A CRYING "WAH WAH" EFFECT ON YOUR GUITAR'S SIGNAL. YOU CAN ALTER THE TONES AND FREQUENCY TO YOUR LIKING, BUT JUST KNOW THAT YOU WILL BE THE CENTER OF ATTENTION WHEN YOU USE THIS PEDAL. IT'S FULL OF VIBRANCY, SO USE TO IT BRING YOUR LEAD GUITAR OR SOLOS TO LIFE. WAH-WAH IS MOST OFTEN USED IN FUNK, ROCK, METAL, AND BLUES—BUT REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU PLAY, YOUR ROAR WILL BE HEARD.

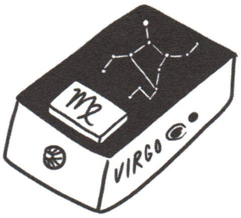
VIRGO

AUG 23 - SEPT 22

The Virgin

~

Compression



VIRGO IS MERCURY'S OTHER HALF THAT OPPOSES GEMINI. METHODICAL, ANALYTICAL, DUTIFUL, AND ABOVE ALL, PURPOSEFUL IN HOW THEY USE THEIR GIFTS AND SKILLS, VIRGO IS MUCH LIKE COMPRESSION. THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF PEDALS, COMPRESSION CREATES A CLEAN AND SMOOTH SOUND BY PUSHING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY NOTE THAT COMES FROM YOUR GUITAR. IT CREATES A WONDROUS TONE THAT BOOSTS THE LEVEL AND SUSTAINS THE NOTE WITHOUT ADDING DISTORTION. IT'S BELOVED BY THE PROS, AND USED IN BASICALLY EVERY TYPE OF MUSIC. BOTTOM LINE: COMPRESSION AND VIRGOS WILL ALWAYS HAVE YOUR BACK.

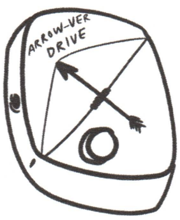
SAGITTARIUS

NOV 22 - DEC 21

The Archer

~

Overdrive



VIVACIOUS, MOTIVATED, AND OPTIMISTIC SAGITTARIUS IS NOT AFRAID TO PUSH ANYTHING TO THE LIMIT. OVERDRIVE SUPPORTS YOUR AMBITION TO PUSH *EVERYTHING* OUT OF YOU GUITAR AND THROUGH YOUR AMP. YOUR SOUND WILL BE GRITTY, RAW, AND WARM, BUT WITHOUT THE DISTORTION. ANOTHER BONUS OF OVERDRIVE IS THAT IT OFFERS A BIT OF SUSTAIN AND PRODUCES THE SOUND OF A TUBE AMP IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE. IT'S OFTEN USED IN BLUES, HEAVY ROCK, AND PUNK, AND ITS ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO PUSH THE SIGNAL HIGHER. THE ARCHER NOT ONLY ACCEPTS THE CHALLENGE, THEY CHARGE THE OPPORTUNITY WITH UNSTOPPABLE FORCE.

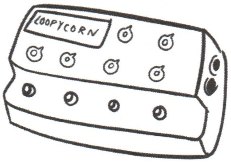
CAPRICORN

DEC 22 -JAN 19

The Goat

~

Looper



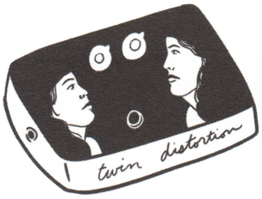
PULLING TOGETHER RESOURCES IS ONE OF CAPRICORN'S GREATEST QUALITIES, WHICH IS WHY THE LOOPER IS CLEARLY THIS SIGN'S PEDAL COUNTERPART. COMPLEX AND ADVANCED, THE LOOPER ACTS AS A DIGITAL RECORDER WITH FEATURES LIKE MEMORY, BUILT-IN RHYTHMS, TEMPO, AND MORE. IT ALLOWS YOU TO RECORD A SECTION FROM YOUR GUITAR PLAYING, LOOP IT, AND BUILD MORE ON TOP OF IT. SIMILAR TO SATURN'S KARMIC AND CYCLICAL INFLUENCE ON CAPRICORN, THE LOOPER WELCOMES ALL THE LAYERS YOU DECIDE TO STACK, EMBRACING THE DETERMINED AND AMBITIOUS SPIRIT OF CAPRICORN.

GEMINI

MAY 21 - JUNE 20

The Twins

Distortion



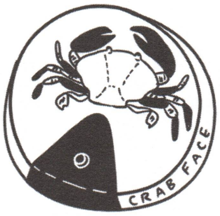
CURIOUS AND FLEXIBLE, ONLY THE DISTORTION PEDAL COULD APPROXIMATE THE COMMUNICATIVE NATURE OF GEMINI. JUST AS EXPRESSIVE, DISTORTION PUSHES AND DRIVES THE SIGNAL TO DISTORT THE SOUND COMING OUT OF YOUR GUITAR. DUALITY AND MULTI-TASKING IS WHAT GEMINI IS KNOWN FOR, AND FOR SOME, THE DISTORTION CAN BE A LITTLE CHAOTIC AND RESTLESS. OFTEN USED IN METAL, ROCK, AND GRUNGE, USE DISTORTION IN TRUE GEM FASHION: TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS LOUD AND (MAYBE NOT SO) CLEAR.

CANCER

JUNE 21 -JULY 22

The Crab

Fuzz



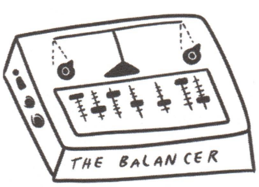
ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN PEDAL EFFECTS, FUZZ SPEAKS TO THE CORE CANCER QUALITIES: WARM, ENCAPSULATING, PROTECTIVE, AND TENACIOUS. KNOWN FOR BEING THE MOST SENSITIVE IN THE ZODIAC, CANCER HAS NO ISSUE USING THEIR PINCHING CLAWS WHEN NEEDED. SIMILARLY, FUZZ SITS BETWEEN OVERDRIVE AND DISTORTION, GIVING THE TONE A WARM DISTORTION WHILE SUPPORTING THE OTHER SOUNDS AROUND IT. HEAVY AND BORDERLINE TORTUROUS, IT'S NO WONDER THIS PEDAL HAS BEEN USED BY EMOTIVE GUITAR PLAYERS LIKE COURTNEY LOVE. WHETHER YOU'RE INTO PSYCH, CLASSIC ROCK, OR GRUNGE, USE IT TO DIVE INTO THE FULL DEPTH OF YOUR EMOTIONS, AND TAKE EVERYONE ELSE WITH YOU.

LIBRA

SEPT 23 - OCT 22

The Scales

Equalizer



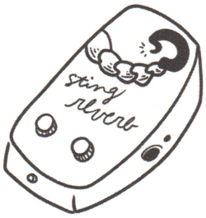
IF IT'S BALANCE YOU SEEK, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN AN EQ PEDAL. SHORT FOR EQUALIZER, THIS PEDAL CHANNELS LIBRA'S DIPLOMATIC AND ACCOMMODATING NATURE, HELPING TO SHAPE YOUR TONE AND GIVE YOU MORE CONTROL OF THE FREQUENCIES IN THE BANDWIDTH. YOU CAN GET VERY CREATIVE WITH AN EQ PEDAL. IT'S YOUR PARTNER IN IMPROVING TONE AND ACHIEVING YOUR IDEAL SOUND. HOWEVER, BE WARNED: IT'S A VERY POWERFUL DEVICE, AND YOUR SOUND CAN CHANGE DRASTICALLY WHEN SHIFTING THE SLIDERS. WHETHER YOU ARE INSPIRED BY LO-FI OR HIGH-QUALITY TONE, EQ WILL LEAD YOU TO THE HARMONY AND BALANCE YOU DESIRE.

SCORPIO

OCT 23 - NOV 21

The Scorpion

Reverb



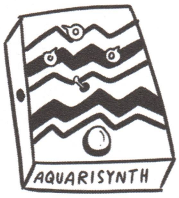
NO WORD IS MORE SYNONYMOUS WITH SCORPIO THAN DEPTH. THE BROODING AND MAGNETIC SCORPIO IS WELL ACQUAINTED WITH BEING IMMERSED, AND IMMERSING OTHERS, IN THEIR DEEP HAUNTING WATERS—AND REVERB MATCHES THAT DEPTH. A NATURALLY OCCURRING PHENOMENA, REVERB IS THE ACT OF SOUND BOUNCING OFF OF THE WALLS AND SURROUNDINGS IN A ROOM. (THINK OF WHAT YOUR VOICE COULD DO IN A LARGE, EMPTY HALL.) USING REVERB CREATES A LAYERED, RICH, AND EMOTIVE EFFECT THAT SPREADS THE SIGNAL OUT AND CREATES AMBIENCE. THE MAGICAL POWER OF REVERB CAN GIVE YOUR SOUND THAT INTENSE, ELUSIVE FEEL THAT SCORPIO IS KNOWN FOR.

AQUARIUS

JAN 19 - FEB 18

The Water Bearer

Synth



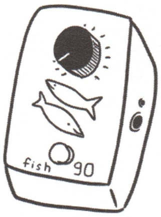
ECCENTRIC AND FORWARD-THINKING AQUARIUS RELATES TO NO PEDAL MORE THAN THE SYNTH. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST UNCONVENTIONAL PEDALS OUT THERE. NON-CONFORMIST AND FUTURISTIC, THE SYNTH PEDAL TAKES THE SIGNAL FROM YOUR GUITAR AND USES A PITCH-TRACKING MECHANISM TO MODULATE THE INPUT SOUND. WITH THIS, YOU CAN SCULPT YOUR SYNTH TONE AND MAKE IT AS QUIRKY AS YOU'D LIKE. AQUARIUS YEARNS TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN THE MOST UNIQUE AND INVENTIVE WAY. AND WHAT IS MORE INNOVATIVE THAN MAKING YOUR GUITAR SOUND LIKE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A GUITAR?

PISCES

FEB 19 - MARCH 20

The Two Fishes

Phase Shifter



THE LAST SIGN OF THE ZODIAC IS SAID TO HOLD ALL OF THE INFORMATION OF THE OTHER SIGNS, MAKING IT THE MOST WISE BUT ALSO THE MOST MUTABLE AND VERSATILE. THE PHASE SHIFTER IS A FORM OF DELAY, THAT ALLOWS THIS COMPASSIONATE AND DREAMY SIGN TO CREATE LUSH AURAL SOUNDSCAPES. LIKE THE TWO FISHES, THE GUITAR'S SIGNAL IS SPLIT INTO TWO EXACT COPIES. IT THEN PHASES ONE OF THE COPIES, AND COMBINES THE TWO AS A SINGLE SIGNAL. THIS CREATES NOTCHES IN THE FREQUENCY THAT RESULTS IN THE SHIMMERING WAVES OF SOUND. THE PHASE SHIFTER WILL CREATE SOFTER EFFECTS, BUT ITS MESMERISING PRESENCE WILL GIVE YOU LOTS OF VERSATILITY IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION YOU DECIDE TO SWIM IN.

Yuna

Yuna knows what she wants and isn't afraid to truly honor her potential. The singer-songwriter from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia went viral back in 2009, when Myspace was the platform to self-distribute music. At the time, Yuna (born Yunalis binti Mat Zara'ai) was attending law school, and looking for a creative outlet. She had first picked up the guitar at 14 years old, but would go back and forth with the instrument for years until, at 19, she taught herself the three chords that would create "Deeper Conversation"—the first song she ever wrote as well as her first hit single. With this success she quickly rose to international stardom, and the following year she moved to Los Angeles to challenge herself in a different market.

Throughout her career, Yuna has won numerous awards, including Best New Artist and Best Pop Song for the Malaysian Music Awards, and she has been nominated at the MTV Europe Music Awards, BET Awards, and World Music Awards. She's released three U.S. studio albums in her career, and her latest, *Rouge*, released in July on Verve Forecast Records and Universal Music Group, establishes her identity even deeper. Through vibrant collaborations with artists like Little Simz, G-Eazy, and Masego, Yuna is challenging her pop and R&B sound. Her new single, "Forevermore," revolves around paying homage to her home country—with *Rouge*, Yuna is coming back to herself.

From her humble beginnings strumming chords in her bedroom, to now gracing international stages, Yuna spoke with She Shreds about her transition from Malaysia to LA, being a Muslim pop star, and the rage and love of *Rouge.*

INSTRUMENT: TAYLOR T5 RED STANDARD
AMP: 1968 CUSTOM DELUXE REVERB
OTHER: TC ELECTRONIC HALL OF FAME REVERB, TC HELICON VOICELIVE PLAY

PHOTOS - JAZMIN GARCIA

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DID YOU HEAR GROWING UP?

Growing up in a Malaysian household, we listened to a lot of local artists. But my dad was a rock 'n' roll fan, and we'd listen to a lot of pop and rock music from America and Europe. At the same time, I grew up watching a lot of Bollywood movies and was exposed to a lot of Bollywood songs. When I was maybe 12, I discovered my own taste for music. I started listening to No Doubt—I was a huge Gwen Stefani fan—and Alanis Morissette. Whenever the songs would come out, I would record them from the radio. I always had a blank [cassette] tape ready, and then found out what song it was. Back then, we didn't have Google.

WHEN WERE YOU INTRODUCED TO THE GUITAR?

I was 14 years old. I was so used to having [my father's] guitar at home but never knew how to play. I would mess around with it, pretending to play. But it was always in my mind like, "One day I'm gonna figure out how to use this thing!" My dad bought me a small, cheaper electric guitar and asked me, "What song do you want to learn to play?" I wanted to play "Don't Speak" by No Doubt so I could sing along. That's how I learned how to play. And then I started playing super cliché songs like "Kiss Me" by Sixpence None The Richer.

WAS GUITAR THE FIRST INSTRUMENT YOU WROTE A SONG ON?

Yeah, I remember not knowing how to write a song and desperately wanting to. I just couldn't crack the code. I tried on the piano, and it wasn't working out. I was at home one day and I forced myself to play a chord on the guitar and sing gibberish over it. That's how I wrote my first song. It was a lot of trial and error, but eventually that started a whole different game for me. It was awesome.

DID PUTTING OUT YOUR MUSIC ON MYSPACE INFLUENCE THE WAY YOU APPROACHED HOW YOU DISTRIBUTED MUSIC?

Back then I didn't really think about selling my music. I just wanted to share it. That's the cool thing about music now. Like, here's the link, now download it. I used to blog a lot on LiveJournal and Myspace. I got a lot of followers, so I wanted to put my singing on my blog and they ended up loving it. It wasn't until later on that I figured out that in Malaysia the digital distribution for music wasn't huge. Then I wanted to figure out how I could monetize my songs. I learned how to print my own CDs, get my own barcode... I started to register my songs independently. Back in Malaysia, I had a handful of songs that were mine and were playing on the radio. I was running my own company and putting out music independently. I had to figure it out on my own. Thank God when I started, the independent music scene started in Malaysia.

TEXT - JESSICA DIAZ-HURTADO

YOU SPENT A LOT OF YOUR LIFE DEVELOPING YOUR CRAFT IN MALAYSIA. AT WHAT MOMENT DID YOU FEEL READY FOR A CHANGE?

The moment I found out that I would have a place in LA was when a label reached out to me and said, "Do you want to come to LA and work with some producers?" And I said, "Hell yes!" There was no question about it. I was already doing enough for the music industry back home. I was playing all these award shows to death every year, so I needed something new. It was really tough. Back home, for a young girl like me to be a household name independently, it was weird. A lot of frontrunners of the industry didn't really like that. It was difficult to push my music on my own without having all these challenges. There was a time when I won an award and the award got retracted from me.

WHY?

There was a mistake or something like that. I was already on stage, on national TV, taking the award and thanking my fans. That's when I decided to leave Malaysia and focus on my work and my music. That was it for me.

NOW THAT YOU'RE IN LA, WHAT DO YOU MISS THE MOST ABOUT HOME?

The food is good and hard to replicate the taste and quality. Last night I tried to make a beef curry for me and my husband, but there was something missing—it's not like how it is back home. I got super frustrated about it, especially being a perfectionist. Like, I can make great music but not great food! *[Laughs.]*

BEING A MUSLIM WOMAN OF COLOR IN THE U.S., SPECIFICALLY IN OUR CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE, HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR ROLE AS AN ARTIST AND

WHAT IT REPRESENTS FOR OTHER YOUNG WOMEN?

A lot of girls like me are living in fear. They're not able to live their lives to the fullest. Coming from Malaysia, we didn't really face Islamophobia or xenophobia. But coming out here, I see the importance now. Sometimes people made me out to be the Muslim pop star poster child, and I wasn't embracing it. Now I see that representation is everything. You see someone out there doing something and you get inspired to do whatever you want to do the best you can. It's important for girls to have that in their lives. I don't see myself as a role model, but I see myself as, "Hey, I'm out here, and you can do this too. Don't be like me, be yourself. You have to be better than me."

LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT FASHION—YOU ONCE HAD A CLOTHING LINE CALLED NOVEMBER CULTURE. HOW DO FASHION AND MUSIC SPEAK TO EACH OTHER?

When you're musically inclined, you develop your own style. It has to do with identity as an artist. I used to struggle a lot with what I wanted to look like. Being a hijabi Muslim girl, I didn't want to take off my scarf. I wanted to have fun though. I practice modesty, so for me it's so easy. Everything I have is long sleeves and long pants. I try to be free with whatever I want to wear. I like to experiment and I have no rules when it comes to fashion. Style is really important on an everyday basis. But when I'm on stage, I get to amplify my fashion sense to 100. It always comes down to what I'm comfortable with.

IN 2016 YOU RELEASED *CHAPTERS*, AND IT WAS MORE INTIMATE AND VULNERABLE THAT YOUR PREVIOUS WORK. WITH *ROUGE*, WHAT SOUND WERE YOU GOING FOR?

I remember walking into the studio and talking to my producer, Robin [Hannibal]. I said, "You know, I want my new album to sound like one of those old vinyl records from the '70s or '80s that you pluck from the $1 bin in an old record store, and you just know it's gonna be good." You don't know the artist, but they have a dope outfit on or a dope crazy photo. Robin loved the idea, so we went into the studio and reconstructed old record sounds and melodies. We made it into something new and current. I'm excited about it. It feels like a throwback with a funk element to it.

ARE YOU A VINYL COLLECTOR?

I try to be. It's funny, as you get older you don't want to buy things. You want to get rid of things *[laughs]*—vinyl included. If I find an album that I really love, I try and get a vinyl copy. It's always a rare album. I'm a huge Françoise Hardy fan, the French singer-songwriter from the '60s.

IS THERE A SPECIFIC REASON YOU CALLED THIS ALBUM *ROUGE*?

I'm embracing red as my color now. I'm a little older and wiser since I got married. Rouge is the color of fashion, and I'm at the age where I don't want to be filtered anymore. People should accept the raw me. I don't like to be the nice, perfect girl just singing about love and friendship. People need to see the side of me that's very passionate, stern, and disciplined. I get angry as well, but I also love fiercely. Everything about me—I'm here, I'm present. I feel like I'm stronger as a woman now. I'm at a place where I just want to lead my life the way I want to.

YOU'VE WORKED WITH PHARRELL AND USHER. WHAT OTHER ARTISTS WOULD YOU LOVE TO COLLABORATE WITH?

I'm a huge Coldplay fan. I would love to have a song with them. I would also love to have a song with Daft Punk. That'd be so cool. Why am I just now thinking of this now? Let's make it happen!

THE MUSIC VIDEO FOR "FOREVERMORE" IS A VISUAL DEDICATION TO YOUR UPBRINGING IN MALAYSIA, AND YOU FILMED IN 11 DIFFERENT LOCATIONS. WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR ROOTS IN THIS VISUAL?

I want to give people a visual of what I saw when I was a kid. I want to take them to all these places where I used to run or bike on these roads. This is what we saw every single day. I want to not have a barrier anymore. A lot of my fans, if they're not Malaysian, don't know who I am. They may be like, "Is she Jamaican? Is she Asian? Is she Thai?" My husband directed the music video, and we thought it was time that we go full-on Asian. We love Asian cinema, we love our country and the subcultures it has. We wanted to show that. I grew up having friends who were in a motorcycle gang, so I thought, "Let's make our own motorcycle gang" and put them in the music video to give people a taste of Malaysia.

People should accept the raw me. I don't like to be the nice, perfect girl just singing about love and friendship.

People need to see the side of me that's very passionate, stern, and disciplined. I get angry as well, but I also love fiercely.

Everything about me—I'm here, I'm present.

Adrienne Lenker

As a kid, Adrianne Lenker had a complicated relationship with one of her usual pastimes: alien watching. It slightly frightened her, partially due to film depictions of exterrestrial war, and partially for even scarier reasons. What if human-created hostility and pollution meant aliens would never land on Earth? What if we humans had ruined our chances to peer into the mystery and beyond? On Big Thief's latest album, *U.F.O.F.*, released in May on 4AD, Lenker makes friends with the unknown, the celestial secrets and existential mysteries of imminent death that connect us all.

Following 2016's *Masterpiece* and 2017's *Capacity*, along with her 2018 solo debut for Saddle Creek, Lenker wrote most of the songs on *U.F.O.F.* while on tour. Using tangible approaches to abstract journeys of death and love, she weaves a story of despair through quiet strumming on "Orange" and faces an otherworldly demon with a drowned-out electric guitar on the eerie "Jenni." She Shreds spoke to Lenker about the literal and metaphorical alien themes on *U.F.O.F.*, her love of acoustic guitar, and maintaining creativity in an industry fueled by product.

INSTRUMENTS: COLLINGS SOCO, 1972 MARTIN 6-STRING CUTAWAY ACOUSTIC
AMP: MAGNATONE TWILIGHTER 110
OTHER: ANALOGMAN PRINCE OF TONE OVERDRIVE, STRYMON EL CAPISTAN DTAPE ECHO

PHOTOS - POONEH GHANA

WHAT KIND OF GUITAR DO YOU PLAY?

I play a Collings electric semi-hollow body. It's their SoCo model, with P90 pickups. I've played acoustic guitar since I was a kid. I have a Martin cutaway and a 12-string '72 Martin acoustic. I have such a deep, personal relationship with my guitar. It was my first instrument when I was six. It's like a journey. It tells a whole story.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GUITAR AS A KID?

I played my dad's giant Yamaha acoustic, but then he got me my first guitar, which was a Baby Taylor. Then I got a full-sized Taylor when I was 13. I didn't enjoy playing it. I don't know what it was specifically, but I didn't have this super deep relationship with it so I ended up selling it.

WHAT GEAR DO YOU TAKE ON TOUR WITH YOU?

When it's just me, it's just my [Martin] guitar. It has a pretty nice pickup, and a little microphone so I can get the balance with the DI. When I'm with Big Thief, I have two electric guitars because I play in so many open tunings, and my Magnatone Twilighter amp, which I love.

For a while I didn't have any pedals because I wanted to get a good tone with just the guitar and amp. I added the AnalogMan Prince of Tone overdrive pedal, and then a Strymon El Capistan dTape Echo pedal. And I use my footswitch to turn my tremolo on and off. I've been getting in the habit lately, if I want overdrive, of turning my amp up to 10, which I love because it sounds so much better than a pedal. It [creates] a little bit of a pause but there's something so cool [about it].

YOU'VE MENTIONED HOW ACOUSTIC GUITAR WAS YOUR FIRST LOVE. WHY DO YOU THINK YOU FEEL SO CONNECTED TO IT?

I think it's simply the intimacy of sitting in a room and being able to get a full sound without anything else. It's a lot louder on its own. It fills my ears, and my body is encompassing the sound without anything added. There's no hassle with feedback or electricity. It's pure vibration and it's soothing to me. Nothing really calms me down as much. If I sit in a room with the electric, it's still nice, but even with a semi-hollow body, nothing really compares to that sound of the acoustic.

TEXT - LISA BROWN

WHAT WAS YOUR INTENT WITH THE ALIEN THEMES ON *U.F.O.F.*? WAS IT FROM A PLACE OF INNER EXPLORATION OR MORE FROM FEELING LIKE AN OUTSIDER?

There's so many different [meanings]: making friends with the things that we're afraid of or the things that are unknown, with people across borders or people from other places—or even just your neighbors. Dissolving the otherness. But also, internally, I think we can alienate parts of ourselves. It's this unknown factor of mystery that encompasses everything that makes this collective feeling of insecurity as a species. We don't know where we came from, we don't know where we're going, and we don't really talk about death in a real way.

To build all these structures to keep [an illusion] of safety, like the wall down on the southern border, and building all these walls metaphorically and literally—it's like grasping onto some illusion. [With the alien themes], it's more so this feeling of pushing into the unknown and having respect and curiosity for the mystery. And it's acknowledging that we're also made of that [mystery]. So making friends with [the unknown] and coming at it with love, which is this unifying force. There is no alien, no other.

WHILE MAKING THIS ALBUM, DID YOU COME ACROSS YOUR OWN PERSONAL UNKNOWNS OR LESSONS?

I'm in the midst of a really interesting, sort of challenging lesson, which is about travel and honoring the needs to be more connected to nature and stillness, and what that means. How to sustain a deep inner creative life and how to continue to grow with playing guitar, writing, and singing. The anonymity of not really being in a realm where you're being looked at, you're just doing things for yourself, your heart—I want to sustain that throughout life, and it's a little difficult sometimes. It's like, do I completely ignore the attention and recognition? Do I rise to it? Do I have more responsibility now? In some ways, yes. But then how do I sustain the very magic of the music that brought me here in the first place?

I think it's totally possible. I still feel super connected to my art and my heart and my passion. I think the answer is it can't only be touring. I want to make art at the core of it, but it's hard when you're just producing things and being in front of people. It's always a product or something you're presenting rather than that kind of sacred workshopping time.

AND DOING IT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO, NOT BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO.

Ultimately, that's where the best work comes from. Most of the popular Big Thief songs came out of the quickest, in-between exercise moments. I wrote "Paul" as part of a song-a-day writing exercise when I was living in Bed-Stuy and working at a ramen shop. With "Masterpiece", I was camping and going through something and the song came out in like half an hour. I was like, "I don't even know if that's any good," and I almost didn't even want to record it. I feel like the stuff that ends up being the most popular, and connected to the collective unconscious, is the stuff you do when you tap into that unconscious. But you can't tap into that unconscious if you're self-conscious because you're constantly rating your things, and things are reviewed, and you're constantly producing.

YOUR VOICE MATURED A LOT ON THIS ALBUM, AS IT NATURALLY DOES WHEN WE GET OLDER, BUT WERE YOU ALSO TRYING TO EXPERIMENT WITH YOUR VOCALS?

It all came naturally. My voice has been changing over time. I was 23 or 24 when *Masterpiece* was released, and I'm 27 now and have been on the road and singing so much. I've gotten more playful with it, and did a little experimenting on this record. There's this one song called "Betsy" that I sang really low. At first I was joking, but I didn't even know that part of my voice existed. It ended up sounding cool. The record is us exploring, not a delivery of a perfect product.

IS EACH SONG AN EXPLORATION IN ITSELF OR ARE THEY ALL PART OF A BIGGER STORY?

They're all these little worlds, but each part contains the whole. It's one body with lots of different terrain, almost like the Earth. That's one thing I'm really proud of with this record—how many different terrains there are. The themes are pretty broad. I write about the same stuff all the time and it's very basic. It's death, mystery of birth and being alive, love, longing for transformation and connection with something, and curiosity.

THOSE ARE ALL THINGS THAT CONNECT US AS PEOPLE.

Yeah, and there's little autobiographical things that are more detailed or tangible. I also like to leave room in the songs for other people to inhabit them with their own stories.

YOU OFTEN USE NAMES IN YOUR SONG TITLES AND LYRICS. ARE THEY FICTIONAL CHARACTERS OR AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL?

They're all based on either real people or aspects of my own being. Sometimes I name different parts of myself that I am speaking to.

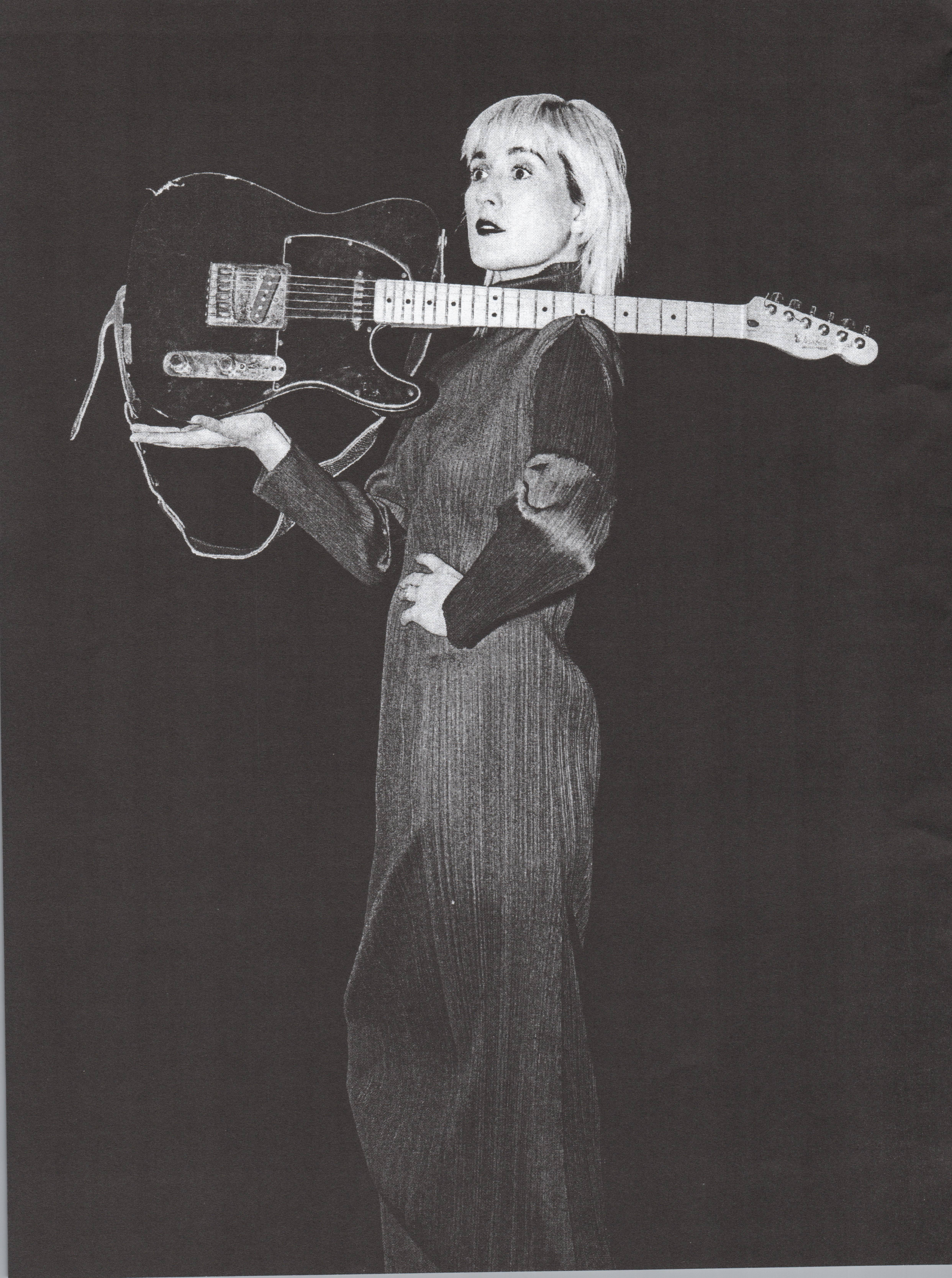
IS THAT THE CASE WITH "BETSY"?

I originally wrote "Betsy" about my dog, when she died. [I was] remembering this really intense moment from when I was living in New York and driving her through the suburbs, taking her to be put to sleep. It was very vivid in my memory, and then it turned into other things. Betsy also represents something in me, that part of me that is with her and that part of me that she brought out. And I think it's like that with people, too, like lovers or friends. You're talking about them but ultimately all you really have is your experience of them and what you see of yourself through them. In my songs, more than just writing about the other person, I'm often identifying parts of myself that were born or died through the arrival or loss of their presence.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR FANS TO TAKE AWAY FROM *U.F.O.F.*?

I hope people get something out of it, not necessarily a certain thing. That they could potentially feel more connected to a part of themselves in some way, whether that feels like sorrow, pain, or joy. It's good to feel and be awake in the experience of your own heart. And with our music, in general, I want everyone to feel welcome and safe. Whether we're playing shows or we're putting out songs, I want people to feel like they can be themselves through it and connect, and shed shame and guilt.

I'm in the midst of a really interesting, sort of challenging lesson, which is about travel and honoring the needs to be more connected to nature and stillness, and what that means. How to sustain a deep inner creative life and how to continue to grow with playing guitar, writing, and singing. The anonymity of not really being in a realm where you're being looked at, you're just doing things for yourself, your heart.



Cate Le Bon

Cate Le Bon isn't afraid to get lost. The Welsh songwriter spent most of 2018 alone, holed up in the remote Lake District of England, writing her fifth and most recent album, *Reward*, released in May on Mexican Summer.

"It was self-imposed alienation," Le Bon says, on a warm spring afternoon. We're sitting under a veranda at the Capri, a sleek garden restaurant and venue in Marfa, the small desert town in West Texas. It's day three of the Marfa Myths festival, and she's just finished soundchecking a few songs that she'll perform later in the evening with Deerhunter, today's headlining act. Le Bon has participated in two Marfa Myths artist residencies: last year recording an unreleased EP with Deerhunter, and this year fulfilling a woodworking residency.

"She operates on pure music," says Deerhunter singer and guitarist Bradford Cox. "Most guitarists tend to have a vocabulary that they turn to, but Cate literally creates her own language. And in my eyes, it's amazing because it doesn't conform to any emotion that's been previously heard."

Over 10 days in Marfa, Le Bon has been crafting a Brutalist-style chair. She says the chair reflects the solitude she felt in the Lake District, where she spent her days learning to make furniture at the Waters and Acland school and her evenings at the piano, penning *Reward*.

INSTRUMENT - FENDER MEXICAN STANDARD TELECASTER
AMP - LIMITED EDITION FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE IN SEAFOAM GREEN
OTHER - BOSS TU-3 CHROMATIC TUNER, BOSS SP-1 SPECTRUM EQUALIZER,
CUSACK MUSIC TAP-A-DELAY, JIM DUNLOP MXR ANALOG CHORUS,
DEATH BY AUDIO APOCALYPSE, XOTIC RC BOOSTER

WHY DID YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEEDED SOLITUDE TO WRITE *REWARD*?

I needed a chance to check in, and make sure that this thing I want people to invest in hadn't just become a habit. I needed to remove myself in order to readdress my relationship with music. And that's also why I went to furniture school, so that music could become a hobby again. During this time, I started to consume music differently. I was listening to loads of Bowie each morning while I had my coffee. I brought about 15 of my all-time favorite records with me. One of them was *Pipe Dreams* by Mary Jane Leach, and it was so amazing to see the way it changed and sounded at different points in the day.

YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN A NUMBER OF COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS, INCLUDING RECORDING WITH TIM PRESLEY AS DRINKS LAST YEAR AND PRODUCING DEERHUNTER'S MOST RECENT ALBUM, *WHY HASN'T EVERYTHING ALREADY DISAPPEARED*. HOW DO YOU APPROACH COLLABORATION?

Tim was the first person I collaborated with where there was no compromise. We were both pushing each other forward and it felt really fluid and wonderful. It doesn't always work like that. You can be a massive fan of someone and have no chemistry when it comes to collaboration. Obviously, I love working with Bradford Cox. I could play music with him endlessly.

THE PIANO WAS THE FIRST INSTRUMENT THAT YOU LEARNED TO PLAY AS A CHILD, AND REWARD IS A PIANO-DRIVEN RECORD. DID THIS INSPIRE A SENSE OF YOUTHFULNESS ON THE ALBUM?

I hadn't thought of it that way, but that makes complete sense. When you're living on your own, in many ways it transforms you back into a childlike state, because there's no one to seek approval from, and it's really cathartic to access that. I'm always trying to tap into the unselfconscious awareness of childhood, and sometimes the only way to do that is to remove yourself from everything and everyone.

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU'VE EXTENDED YOUR MUSIC INTO THREE DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS. WHEN YOU RELEASED *MUG MUSEUM* IN 2013, YOU LEARNED TO MAKE CERAMIC MUGS THAT WERE INCLUDED IN EARLY ALBUM BUNDLES. WHAT DIFFERENCES DID YOU FIND BETWEEN WOODWORKING AND POTTERY?

What I really loved about ceramics was that you could call anything a receptacle. You could make something and it didn't have to be perfect, it just had to hold liquid. The difference with furniture is that there is no compromise. It has to be precise, and you need to know your limitations. My hand-eye coordination is a bit whack, which means executing something like Japanese joinery would be a challenge for me. I just don't think that I have the constitution for that level of detail, because really what I enjoy is the design process and the putting together of things. I think ultimately what I'm drawn to is simplicity.

BUILDING A CHAIR SEEMS QUITE PROCEDURAL AND UNLIKE THE NEBULOUS NATURE OF SONGWRITING, BUT I IMAGINE YOU FOUND PARALLELS IN THE PROCESSES?

The making of the album mirrored the process of making a piece of furniture in a way that I didn't intend it to, because the songs started to become solid structures. I'd been living with the songs for so long, which isn't something I usually do. Moments of frustration were lessened because of the patience I'd learned in furniture school. When you're making furniture, it takes a long time to machine the wood to make sure that it doesn't bend. The goal is to have everything looking straight and precise. Things can be beautiful and well-made, but ultimately the superfluous needs to get gone. That was my goal with the record, and with the furniture that I was making.

TEXT - ADELAIDE SANDSTROM

PHOTOS - ANDREIA LEMOS

When you're living on your own, in many ways it transforms you back into a childlike state, because there's no one to seek approval from, and it's really cathartic to access that. I'm always trying to tap into the unselfconscious awareness of childhood, and sometimes the only way to do that is to remove yourself from everything and everyone.

THAT'S INTERESTING, BECAUSE THE ALBUM DOESN'T FEEL ANGULAR OR SOLID TO ME; IT FEELS QUITE ACCESSIBLE AND SOFT AROUND THE EDGES.

I think that's because it was labored over more than my other albums.

YOU USED OTHER INSTRUMENTS ON THE ALBUM, INCLUDING A TELECASTER THAT YOU'RE PARTICULARLY FOND OF, RIGHT?

Yeah, my dad bought [the Telecaster] for me when I was 14. I've got other guitars, and it's not a particularly amazing one, but I love it and it fits me. I also use a white Fret-King that was a gift from a friend in Wales. It looks amazing, like a kid's drawing of a guitar.

I READ THAT AFTER A RECENT SHOW SOMEONE LIKENED A GUITAR SOLO YOU PLAYED TO A "BIRD PLAYING A TIN CAN." IS THERE A STORY BEHIND THAT?

There is. John Cale had asked me to sing with him at the Barbican. I don't think I've ever cried before when someone has asked me to do something, but it's John Cale and I just couldn't believe it. When I got there, I didn't know what to expect, and he said to me, "Pick up the guitar, love." So I did, and I played a solo, and afterwards he looked at me and said, "Well, it's not the blues, is it?"

WOW, I WONDER WHAT YOU WERE EMOTING IN ORDER TO GENERATE THAT REACTION?

[Laughs] I don't know! Someone in the audience texted my close friend and said, "Cate's just done a guitar solo that sounds like a bird playing a tin can." I think it's a lovely compliment.

YOU'VE RECENTLY ACQUIRED A PEDAL THAT'S QUITE DIFFICULT TO COME BY. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT?

I've just added a Boss SP-1 Spectrum pedal to my setup, which makes your guitar sound like a piece of shit but in a tasteful way. Something like a DI guitar that's really thin, and makes it sound like a bird playing a tin can *[laughs]*. It was a gift from Josh Klinghoffer, who has played guitar all over but currently [plays] with the Red Hot Chili Peppers. He saw me trying to recreate this thin, wiry guitar sound, and one morning we were having breakfast and he said, "This is what you're looking for." At the time, I had no idea that it was so rare. I've also added an MXR Analog Chorus pedal and a Cusack Tap-A-Delay pedal.

WHAT WAS THE RECORDING PROCESS LIKE FOR *REWARD*? DID YOU USE AN AMPLIFIER WITH YOUR GUITAR OR WAS IT DIRECT?

It was direct. I think it's a taste thing. I like the sound of a brittle tone. I remember hearing the electric saz, the Turkish instrument, when I was young and being excited by that sound. But at this point I'm over that *[laughs]* and I think I've moved on. The chorus pedal that I used on this album seemed to fit the architecture of the songs.

AFTER YOU HAD FINISHED WRITING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT, WHERE DID YOU TAKE THE ALBUM TO RECORD?

First, I took it to a studio in Stinson Beach, California, which is this beautiful place between the mountains and the ocean. It feels isolated there as well, which I think is important. Then I tried to take it to LA, but it was too fractious of an environment to be able to step into the record again, so I took it to Joshua Tree for a month. I found that again having a bubble to create in turned out to be quite beneficial.

REWARD FEELS LIKE YOUR MOST COMPLETE AND PERSONAL MUSICAL STATEMENT TO DATE. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

I usually shy away from being so direct, but considering that it was such a strange year in my life, it felt wrong to be obtuse about the music. I think there's a coldness to it, but hopefully it's balanced with a feeling of intimacy.

Bedouine

Recording an album can often feel like setting a particular time of your life into stone. The necessary exposure and permanence can feel emotionally turbulent. But Los Angeles-based Azniv Korkejian, who performs as Bedouine, counteracts that dynamic with soft and sturdy confidence. Korkejian's palpable ease is apparent on her sophomore album, *Bird Songs of a Killjoy*, released on Spacebomb Records in June. Over 12 songs, Korkejian captures moments of ending and acceptance, like on "When You're Gone," an anxious but mellow tribute to the feeling of absence; "Bird Gone Wild," a testament to the journey of immigration that Azniv's family took in her childhood; and "Bird," a reflection on a past intimacy.

On the phone with She Shreds, Korkejian spoke about the agency that came with being heavily involved in the recording and mixing of her own album, and all of the challenges that come with letting an album live and breathe in the world. That can be one of the hardest parts of making an album, but Korkejian understands the power of setting it free.

INSTRUMENT - 1930S MARTIN COLLETI PARLOUR GUITAR
AMP - 1960S BLACKFACE PRINCETON REVERB

PHOTOS - GRACE RIVERA

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GUITAR?

I definitely have a beginner's mind when it comes to guitar. I was classically trained in piano when I was five, and my mom was a little too hard on me, so I quit as soon as I could. I picked up guitar in college and taught myself. It's been a pretty loose journey for me. I've [honed in on] the way I like it to be, but it's something I want to look more into, getting lessons and actually understanding the instrument. It's not been super technical; it's been more [about] emotional navigation.

IS SONGWRITING THERAPEUTIC FOR YOU?

Songwriting has always been like journaling to me; it's a form of expression. I like using an instrument that I don't know backwards and forwards. When I look at the piano, I get completely stunted. I know too much about it so I can't look at it like a beginner, which is what I love about playing guitar, that I'm always doing it by ear and guessing my way around until something feels good.

DID GUITAR CHANGE OR ENHANCE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO MUSIC?

It allowed my relationship with music to be more internal and less about agility. When I was playing piano and classical music, it was more about agility, which is really exciting in a lot of ways, and you still have to be emotional no matter how technical or nontechnical it is. But when I picked up the guitar, there was something about having a beginner's mind that allowed me to navigate more with my emotions or my ear rather than the agility of my fingers or music theory.

WHAT IS YOUR SONGWRITING PROCESS LIKE?

Writing, for me, is not really regimented. It happens when there's a feeling I can stand to confront or try to work through. It's an itch that I need to scratch. I sit down with a guitar and there will usually be a phrase poking at me. On a really good day, I'll work it out start to finish in one sitting. But what usually happens is I'll amass thousands of voice recordings, and when I'm in the mood to really massage an idea out, I'll go back to some of those.

I definitely see the benefit to flexing your songwriting skill like a muscle, but for me it's more of an intermittent response to an emotional need. When something is really bothering me, or when I feel overwhelmed in a good or a bad way, it's this overage that I need to put somewhere.

DID ANY OF THOSE VOICE MEMOS MAKE IT ONTO *BIRD SONGS OF A KILLJOY*?

Pretty much all the songs on the record started out as voice memos. For every one song that makes the record, there has to be about 50 half-finished ideas. All of it is just really slow and steady.

I think about the next record throughout the previous record's cycle. So by the time I was ready to start working on Bird Songs of a Killjoy, I already had a pretty good idea of what would make it. I don't write specifically for the next record; I journal along the course of any time in my life. Some of these songs are older, from the time that I was recording the first record, but other songs are more recent.

DO YOU SEE DISTINCT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUR SELF-TITLED DEBUT AND *BIRD SONGS OF A KILLJOY*? DID YOU FEEL A SHIFT IN SONGWRITING AND TECHNIQUE BETWEEN THE TWO ALBUMS?

It still feels like me, and I definitely didn't make a conscious effort to make a departure. That's up to the listener to decide for themselves. Sometimes I'll talk to people who've heard both and they feel like it's a step up, which is great to hear, but it feels very natural to me.

In terms of songwriting, it's very much intuitive and I do think I branched out a little bit more. There are some strange chord changes that I didn't really write early on. I hear some people using the term "jazzy folk" for my first single, "When You're Gone," and I guess that is branching out for me.

WHAT WAS THE RECORDING PROCESS LIKE FOR *BIRD SONGS OF A KILLJOY*? HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

I recorded at the same studio [as the first album], Sargent Recorders, with Gus Seyffert. It was pretty much me and him, and was done in a similar fashion. If anything, it was a little more stripped back. We had some of the same players, like Smokey

TEXT - BEAN TUPOU

Hormel and Mike Andrews on some guitar, Josh Adams on drums, and a couple of keyboardists. It was all done to tape and then Gus transferred things into Pro Tools. We both picked at the editing and comping because I'm proficient in Pro Tools—I was a sound editor before I was a musician. It gave me the ability to sweep through the session, and a little bit of autonomy when it came to comping something together or picking a take.

DO YOU PREFER TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN THE EDITING AND MIXING BECAUSE OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A SOUND EDITOR?

I think I've grown in the studio. This time around I was a lot more vocal about what I wanted and what I didn't want. Gus is very much the producer still, and he was on the first record too. In a way, he navigated the very early days, and he's very invested in the sound of Bedouine. Because we are so comfortable with each other and because I can go in there and get some work done myself, it does feel collaborative.

Of course it's easier said than done, but I would really recommend to anybody going into the studio with someone who is using Pro Tools to try learning the program for themselves, so that they can take the hot seat and tweak through stuff. But you know, some producers might not be comfortable with that. I'm lucky that I'm working with somebody who I'm so comfortable with and that we can just swap seats for a second.

DID YOU AND GUS WORK TOGETHER BEFORE YOUR FIRST ALBUM?

At first, when I was writing so much, I wanted to put the songs on tape so I could start storing them in a better way than voice memos. I wasn't really sure that I would release anything, but I knew that I at least wanted to give them a good home. I had known Gus for a while, and had been to his house and noticed all of these tape machines everywhere, so I asked him if I could pick his brain about it. We had a really good talk, and then he asked me to sing through a song in one sitting [and record] to tape because he had everything already set up. So I did, and the very first take is "Solitary Daughter" on the first record. That was the first thing we did [together]. I'm so proud of that. It was the very first step towards [Bedouine]. That carved the way for Gus and I to work together.

DID THAT MOMENT HELP SOLIDIFY A SOUND FOR BEDOUINE?

That did set that tone for the [self-titled] record. I think "Solitary Daughter" inherently doesn't need very much, and so we started in such a simple fashion. After I put down that first take, Gus put down this really beautiful bassline and then we worked together on the harmonies. And before we knew it, we were done. It was just so special and I'm so happy to have started that way.

ON YOUR FIRST ALBUM, YOU HAVE A FIELD RECORDING OF YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S STREET IN ALEPPO, SYRIA, THAT APPEARS AT THE END OF THE SONG "SUMMER COLD." DO YOU HAVE ANY MOMENTS LIKE THAT ON THE NEW ALBUM?

On "Echo Park," I built a soundscape of Echo Park Lake [in LA]. I went there and took ambient recordings and layered some things on top of it. In the video, there's a scene where I have a picnic and everybody there is a woman singer-songwriter, and every one of them has their own project. That's kind of an intentional representation of the East Side of LA and the women who play music here. There's so many people in LA doing such exciting things.

I like using an instrument that I don't know backwards and forwards. When I look at the piano, I get completely stunted. I know too much about it so I can't look at it like a beginner, which is what I love about playing guitar, that I'm always doing it by ear and guessing my way around until something feels good.

Fatoumata Diawara

Fatoumata Diawara finds inspiration through honesty: "For me, the best way to write is to close my eyes, think about my life, and defend my truth," she explains, speaking from her home in Paris. "It's always about the truth, always about being yourself, and having no fear to share your own experiences."

Over the last 10 years, the Malian singer-songwriter has woven her stories into stark songs that blend traditional Malian rhythms and inventive guitar melodies. And each of her releases contains traces of her personal history. Diawara was born in the Ivory Coast to Malian parents. As a teenager, she was sent to live with an aunt who worked as an actress, leading Diawara to eventually break into the world of cinema. In between films, she began composing her own music, writing out personal reflections in the Malian language of Wassoulou, and setting them to song.

In her rich, soulful voice, Diawara has shed light on everything from adoption to motherhood to female mutilation. Her most recent album, the Grammy-nominated *Fenfo*, was released by Shanachie Records in 2018. Its title translates to "Something To Say," and its songs feature experimentation with swatches of electric guitar and modern instrumentation. Like Diawara herself, it is bold and unafraid.

INSTRUMENT: GIBSON SG
AMP: FENDER HOT ROD DELUXE
OTHER: DUNLOP CRY BABY CLASSIC WAH, BOSS BD-2 BLUES DRIVER,
BOSS DM-2W DELAY, DIGITECH ERIC CLAPTON CROSSROADS

PHOTOS - KENNY MATHIESON

TEXT - JULYSSA LOPEZ

YOU WERE WORKING AS AN ACTRESS WHEN YOU FIRST BEGAN WRITING MUSIC. WHAT LED YOU TO PICK UP THE GUITAR?

It was the commodity of it, the fact that you can take it everywhere and it's easy to transport. It can be [like a] best friend to a human being. In Mali, we use a lot of guitar in our music—we have a lot of traditional instruments similar to guitars—so to me, it was one of the best instruments. The first one I got, I think, was a Martin.

I READ THAT YOU STARTED PLAYING GUITAR AFTER A MUSICIAN WHO PERFORMED WITH YOU CANCELLED RIGHT BEFORE A CONCERT.

It's true. I started writing songs first—it wasn't my idea to play an instrument, because in Mali, that's not common. Women normally don't play instruments. You don't grow up to be something like this. But I was too dependent on other people when I began performing, and I don't like that. I like to be independent, if I can. It was becoming necessary to play and perform without a band. The best way was having an instrument, piano or guitar, because I was always giving up my shows when the guitar player or the drummer couldn't come. All of my music was composed by guitar, so I realized that if I wanted to do something my way and I wanted to go far and be independent, it was better to learn how to play the instrument. I went to the market, bought a book, and began learning… It's a freedom that's really necessary in the music industry.

YOU MOSTLY STARTED WITH AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR AND LATER—ESPECIALLY ON YOUR ALBUM *FENFO*—YOU BEGAN EXPERIMENTING WITH MORE ELECTRIC SOUNDS. WHAT LED YOU TO MOVE INTO THIS NEW TERRITORY?

I like what the acoustic guitar gives you because it's more melancholic in a way, and you quickly catch the emotions behind the music. That's why on this tour I'm very interested in writing with an acoustic guitar—it's a Martin that I really like. But onstage, I like the electric guitar, especially because it's not always often that women play electric guitar… And now I'm doing small solos onstage. But in the studio, I always like to take my acoustic guitar. It's a very emotional thing; all the songs are composed with acoustic guitar. And then maybe the second guitar is electric when I record.

HOW DO ELECTRIC GUITARS CHANGE OR ENHANCE TRADITIONAL MALIAN ELEMENTS THAT APPEAR IN YOUR MUSIC?

Malian people are used to playing the guitar as a traditional instrument because we have a lot of traditional instruments that are similar—the n'goni, the kora. Once you can play some of those, you are easily able to play a guitar. But most of the time, the traditional instruments are very spiritual. So, for example, when you have your period, you cannot play some of [the traditional instruments] and it makes things more complicated for women. It's changing quite a lot now, but I think that's part of the reason why we didn't grow up seeing women playing those traditional instruments—it was usually about being good singers. Many people don't have the same experience, of course, but in Mali, we don't see many [women] artists playing an instrument. We never go on the harder side, making solos and being more involved.

[In Mali], we also don't learn the same way to play music. It's totally different, and we start a lot from the blues. I cannot read music and I cannot write music [in normal ways], but I feel the music. I don't know what the normal way is, really, and that's something my piano player [Arecio Smith], who is a teacher, always says to me. He tells me that I have a very big sensitivity with music, even more than him. And every time I tell him, "But I have to learn and I have to read the music," he always says, "Don't do that." For him, it's better for me to have my instincts and my relationship with music. It's very physical. I react very physically.

YOU'VE PLAYED WITH A NUMBER OF RENOWNED GUITARISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING PAUL MCCARTNEY, AMADOU BAGAYOKO, AND SAM DICKEY. HOW HAS YOUR EXPERI-

ENCE OF COLLABORATING WITH WESTERN MUSICIANS DIFFERED FROM YOUR COLLABORATIONS WITH MUSICIANS FROM MALI OR AFRICA?

That's quite complicated. There are no boundaries. There is something very strange about music that might be why people say it's an international language. The fact is that we all have a heartbeat, and to your heartbeat you can set any type of music. We can collaborate together—jazz to traditional Malian music to Indian music—but there is a point that we all find in each other, once you get the boom. And once you get that, you make the connection. From there, there is no type of music. Once I've told myself I found the right moment, it becomes easy to find the heartbeat and the soul of the music.

WASSOULOU CULTURE IS KNOWN FOR "SONGS OF ADVICE," IN WHICH WOMEN SINGERS EDUCATE OTHER GIRLS THROUGH MUSIC. HOW DOES THIS ASPECT OF WASSOULOU CULTURE PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR OWN MUSIC? HOW HAVE YOUR MESSAGES OR "SONGS OF ADVICE" CHANGED SINCE YOU'VE BECOME A MOTHER?

In our society in Mali, this is something that is very common. I've been standing by my own story, which has a very strange background, so I don't need to go very far away when I'm writing music. I just have to close my eyes and open one door from my brain and I can make a story, add a melody, and make a song. So, through that, as a Malian woman, I can reach many subjects from my society naturally. If it's female mutilation, I can talk about that because I've been mutilated. I wrote a song about adoption because I've been adopted. If I'm talking about my own story, I will hopefully touch many women. I'm writing my songs to my truth. Everything started from my own story.

THE VISUAL ELEMENTS OF YOUR MUSIC ARE INCREDIBLY BRIGHT, COLORFUL, AND SOMETIMES EVEN FUTURISTIC. HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH THESE VISUAL CONCEPTS? HOW DO THE IMAGES HELP REVEAL THE MESSAGES IN YOUR MUSIC?

It depends on the moment. I'm very connected with myself most of the time, and I'm very fast when I have to select what I want. When we are about to create music or videos, my manager or people that I'm working with will sometimes propose things to me and I very quickly tell them what I want. Nothing is prepared before. Everything is very instinctive with me, and that's how I'm working with my images. It comes from the feeling I have at the moment.

YOU'RE IN PARIS RIGHT NOW WITH YOUR SON. ARE YOU WORKING ON MUSIC WHILE YOU'RE WITH HIM, OR DO YOU LIKE TO SPACE OUT TIME TO FOCUS ON WRITING?

I like to do everything together. It doesn't matter if I'm a mom or not. I'm always busy working. [For] the next album, we already have a lot of stuff, and I'm excited, so we're going to just keep working.

There is something very strange about music that might be why people say it's an international language. The fact is that we all have a heartbeat, and to your heartbeat you can set any type of music. We can collaborate together—jazz to traditional Malian music to Indian music—but there is a point that we all find in each other, once you get the boom. And once you get that, you make the connection. From there, there is no type of music.

THE BASICS OF IMPROVISATION

TEXT - KAREN HOGG

Improvisation can seem a bit overwhelming—and it's no wonder. The misconceptions around the practice of improvising start with the dictionary definition of the word: "The art or act of improvising, or of composing, uttering, executing, or arranging anything without previous preparation," according to Dictionary.com. This is not totally aligned with the reality of how people learn to improvise. And it is particularly misleading for budding improvisers. In fact, it does take practice to sound effortless and fluid when soloing.

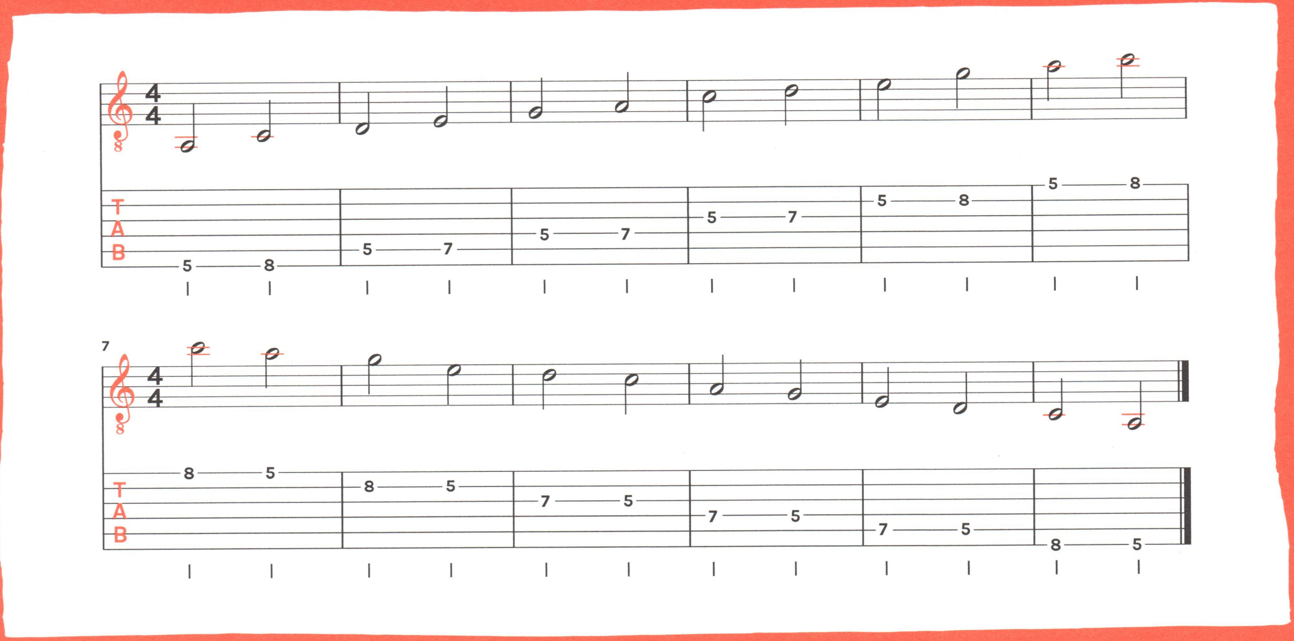
Anyone can learn to improvise, and if you know where to begin it's possible to sound good in a relatively short period of time, regardless of your experience. While certainly not the only framework one can learn from, many guitarists start their improvising journey with the minor pentatonic scale played over a 12-bar blues chord progression. For this lesson, we are going to learn a fingering of the minor pentatonic scale in the key of A, and you will need a backing track of a 12-bar blues in A. While there are plenty of these backing tracks on YouTube, it can also be fun to play over a song you love; for example, "The Ice Queen" by Sue Foley is a great blues tune in A.

The Scale

Let's start by playing this fingering of the A minor pentatonic scale.

SEE EXAMPLE:

5th fret and 8th fret on your low E string
5th fret and 7th fret on your A string
5th fret and 7th fret on your D string
5th fret and 7th fret on your G string
5th fret and 8th fret on your B string
5th fret and 8th fret on your high E string



Play through the entire scale, both ascending and descending in pitch. It's not enough to play through the scale once or twice; you need to develop muscle memory. The less you have to think about where your fingers go, the more fluid and creative you can be. Don't leave out this important step. However, it's important not to get stuck here.

Now, using this scale, start making music! This is where many beginning lead guitarists get overwhelmed. Here are some ideas and exercises that will make the process smooth and fun.

Start Small

Remember: you don't have to play all of the notes in the scale within the same guitar solo. Start by soloing on one string. For example, if you choose to improvise on the high E string, just play the 5th and 8th fret. Play along to your backing track and try not to worry about how you sound. Once you feel comfortable, add the B string and solo on two strings. Then add the G string, and so on. Before you know it, you'll be utilizing the entire scale in no time.

Get Rhythm

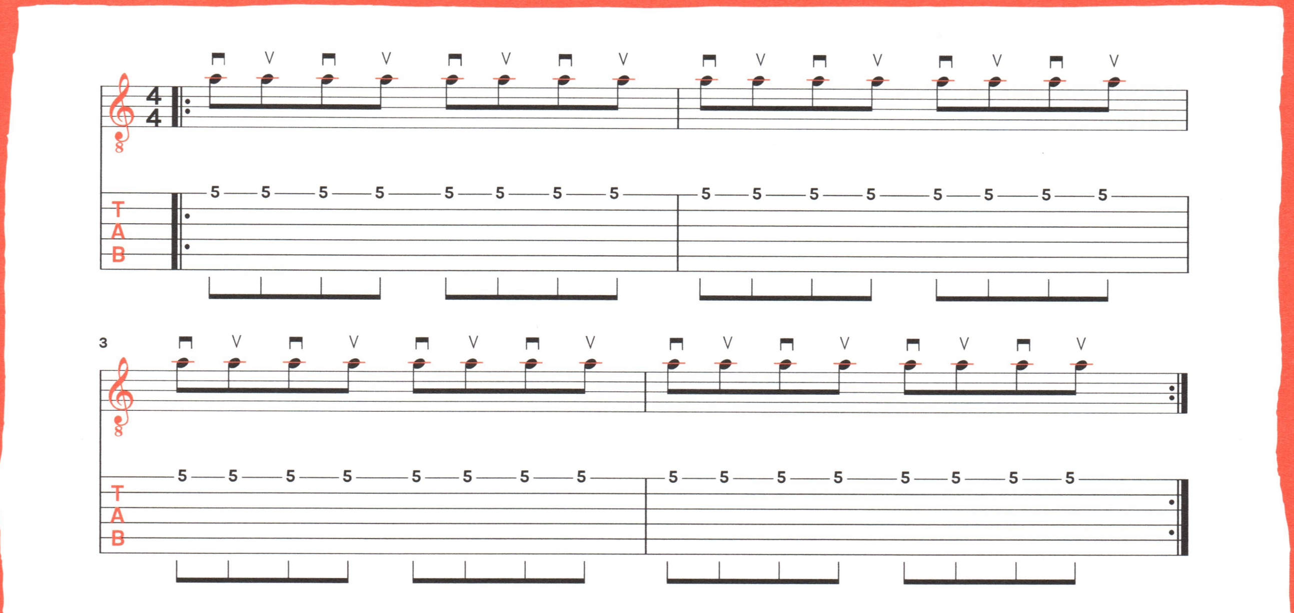
While playing on only one or two strings, you may find yourself getting bored. What are your options?

CHANGE UP THE RHYTHM.

You can play some great solos with just one note if you make the rhythm interesting. While you can do the following exercises on any note in the scale, let's begin by focusing on A (the 5th fret on the high E string). Start by playing 8th notes: one-and-two-and-three-and-four-and, etc.

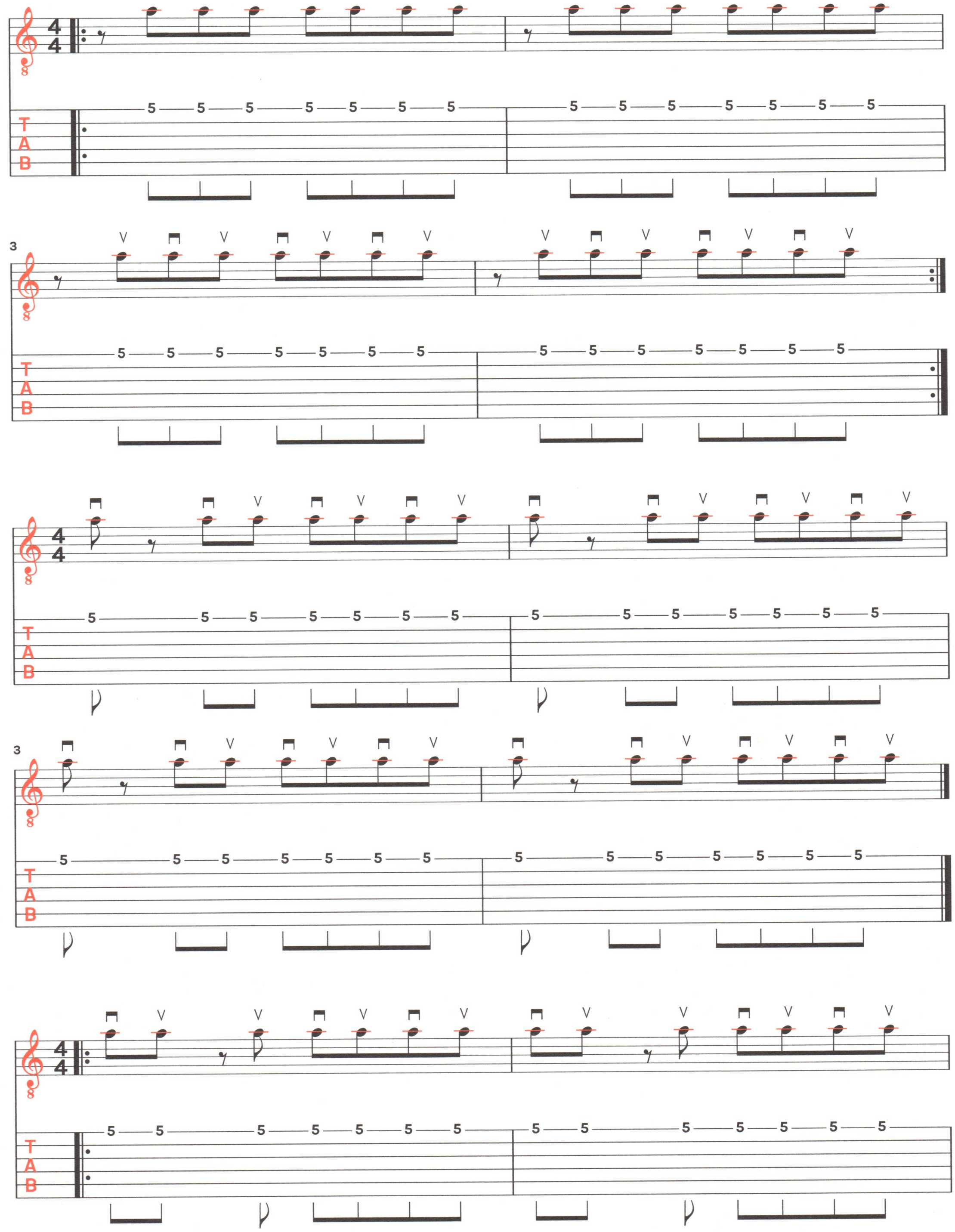
USE ALTERNATE PICKING.

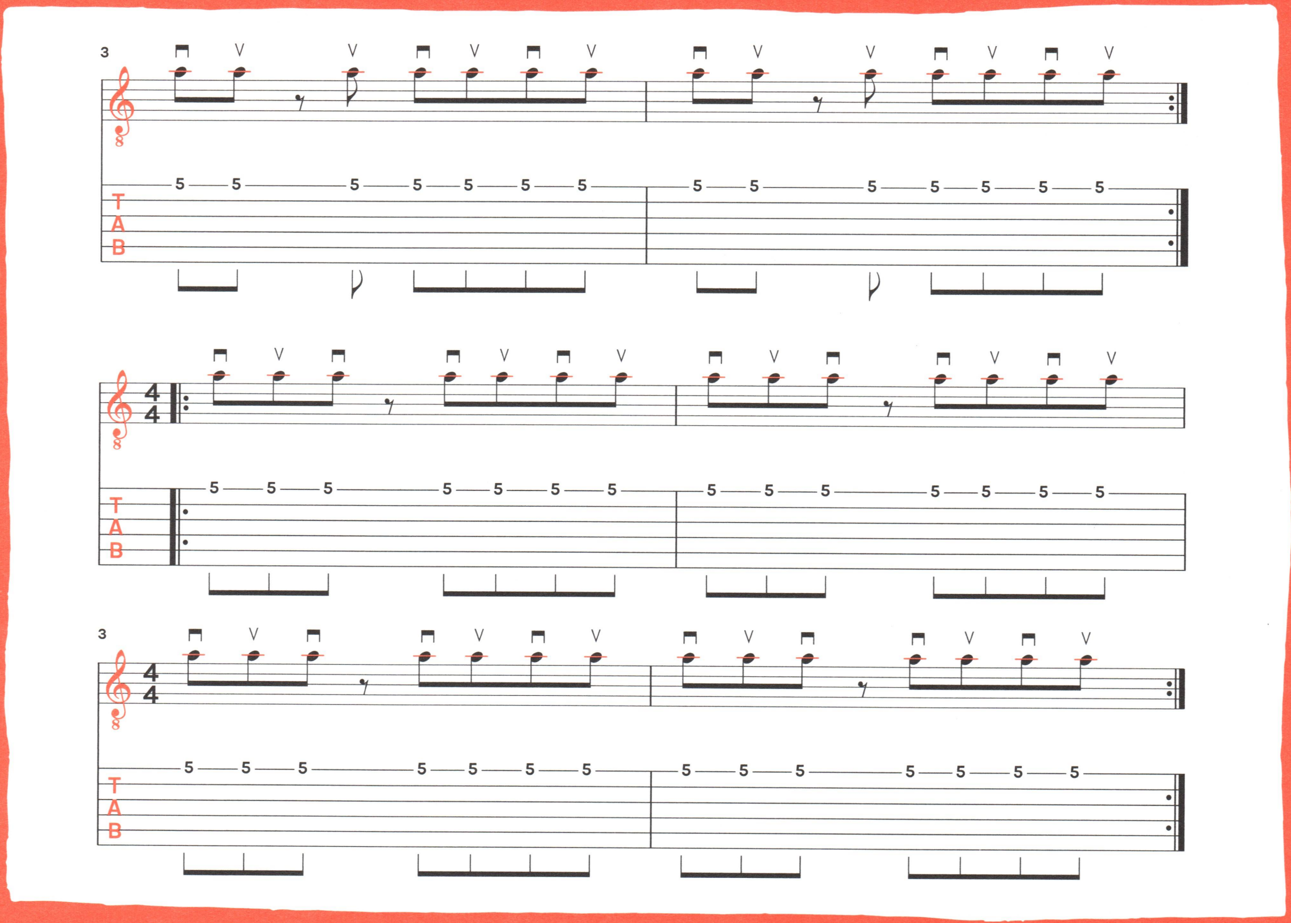
Play a downstroke on the downbeat (**one**-and-**two**-and-**three**-and-**four**-and) and an upstroke on the upbeat (one-**and**-two-**and**-three-**and**-four-**and**).



REMOVE NOTES IN THIS RHYTHMIC PATTERN.

Go through each of the 8th notes and practice playing the A and leaving out one of the 8th notes. (See examples.) As you get comfortable with this, you can practice playing these various rhythms and adding in more notes. It may seem like this exercise, which requires a lot of focus, is the antithesis of the off-the-cuff freedom of improvisation, but what you are doing is training your ears, hands, and brain to have a variety of different rhythms at your fingertips. Have patience with the process. It will make your playing more varied and interesting.


4/4
T
A
B
5
3



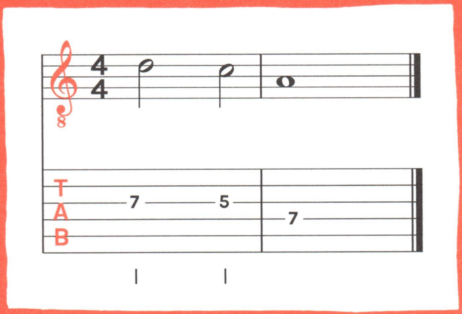
Timbre/Dynamics/Articulation

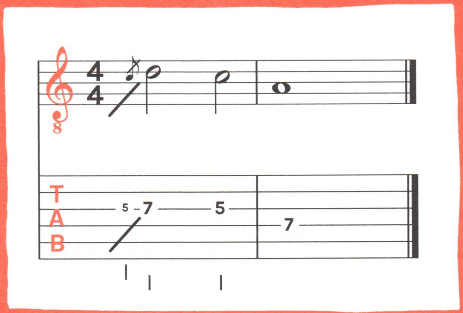
It's not just what you play, but how you play it. For instance, you can vary the dynamics by playing loudly, and then softly. Changing the volume can create a huge impact.

TRY SLIDING INTO SOME NOTES.

While there are several different ways to approach sliding, we'll just look at one. Place your third finger of your fretting hand on the 5th fret of the G string. Pluck that note and then slide the third finger to the 7th fret of the same string. The trick is to keep pressing the finger into the fretboard as you slide. If you stop pressing, you will lose the sound. Practice the slide until you can play it smoothly.

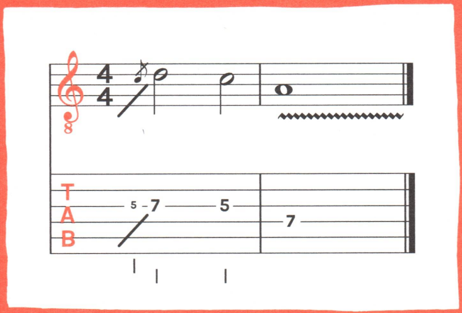
LET'S LOOK AT THE THREE NOTES IN THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLE:





Try sliding into the first note, as demonstrated in the example below. Notice the difference in the sound between the two examples.

Add some vibrato to the last note, as shown in the example below. To create the vibrato, you can use your third finger on the 7th fret of the D string. Place your first and second fingers directly behind the third finger, on the same string, to assist. Pluck the note, moving the string back and forth with all three fingers, down toward the ground and up towards your face. There are two important things to remember here. First, just like the slide, keep pressing your third finger into the fretboard as you move the string back and forth. Second, it helps to have the bottom part of your first finger, where the finger meets the palm, leaning against the guitar neck right around the 5th fret of your high E string. This acts as a way to stabilize your hand as you shake the note. Notice the difference in the sounds of the last few examples. It's the same three notes, yet varying how you play a phrase can make your lead playing sound great.



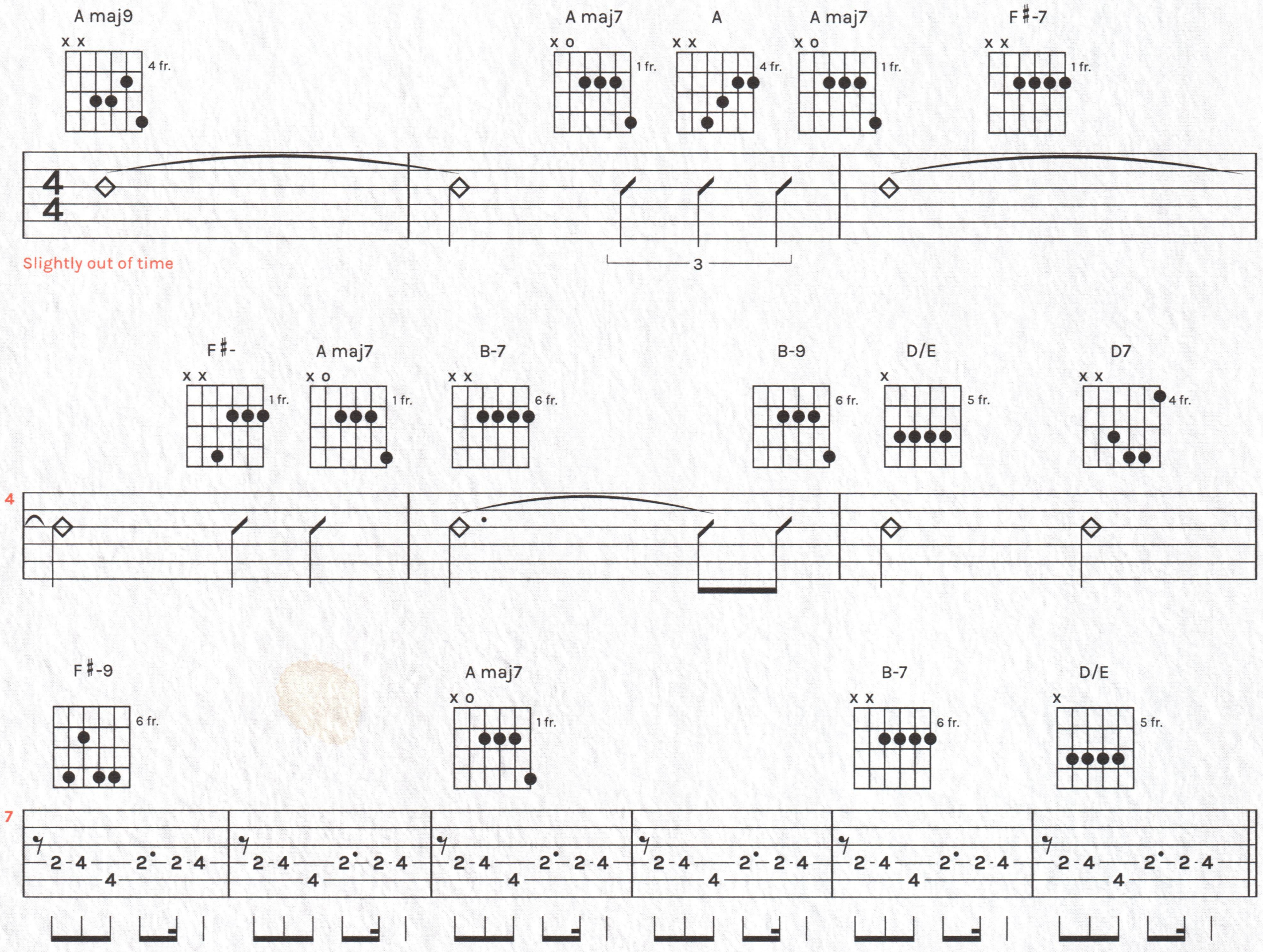
You can also experiment with where you pick the note. Your notes will have a different timbre depending on where you pick them: close to the bridge, close to the fretboard, or in between. Try playing the same phrase with the pick in different places and notice the differences in tone. One place isn't necessarily better than another; it's that they produce different timbres that can create variety in your sound. This is just as much a part of improvisation as learning what notes to play.

This is just a start to working on your improvisation. As you continue to practice, you will encounter more layers: different scales, playing over changes, landing on various chord tones and non-chord tones, and much more. Don't try to learn everything all at once; it's too easy to get so bogged down that you never even start. Trust the process, and with patience and dedication you will become an expert improviser!

BLANK MARQUEE

Yuna and G-Easy

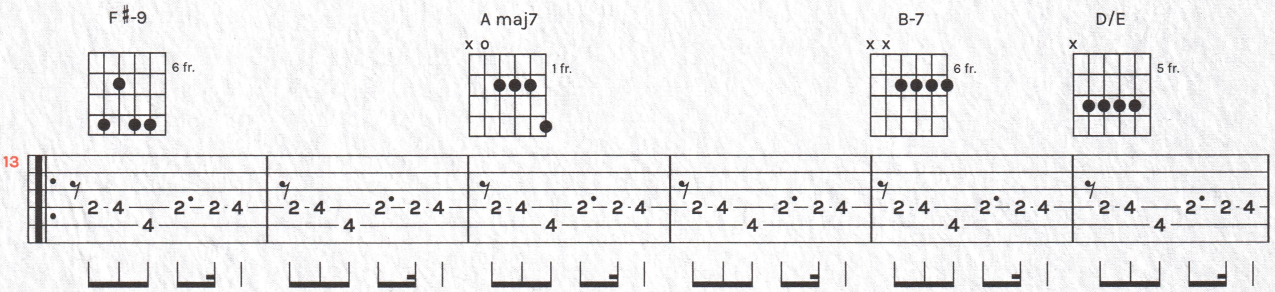
Intro:


A maj9
4 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
A
4 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
F♯-7
1 fr.
3
F♯-
1 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
B-7
6 fr.
B-9
6 fr.
D/E
5 fr.
D7
4 fr.
4
F♯-9
6 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
B-7
6 fr.
D/E
5 fr.
7
2 4 4 2 2 4

Slightly out of time

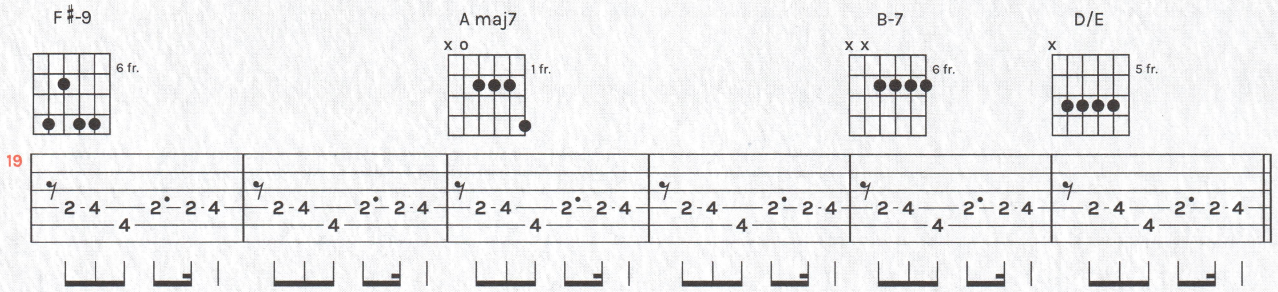
Groove comes in

Verse:

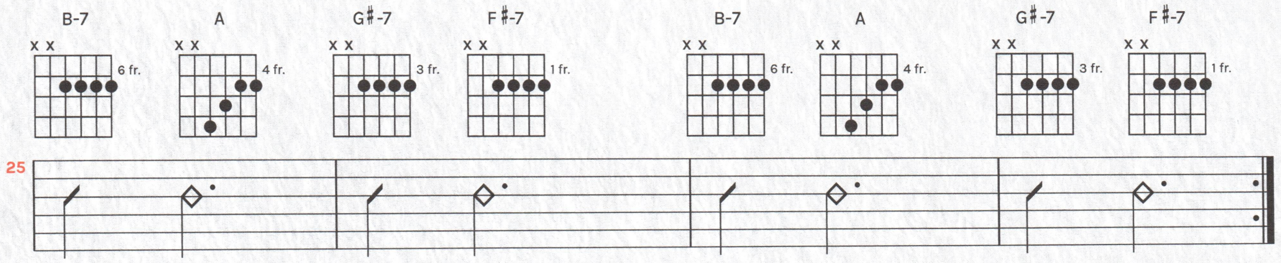

F♯-9
6 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
B-7
6 fr.
D/E
5 fr.
13
2 4 4 2 2 4

TABLATURE - KAYCIE SATTERFIELD

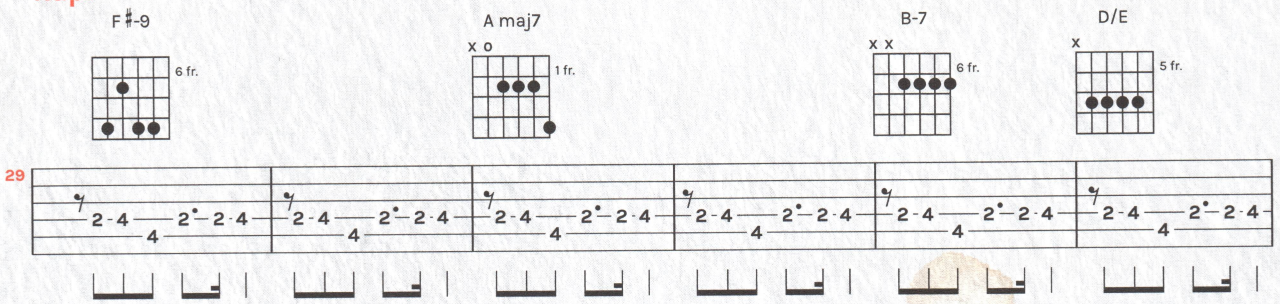
LAYOUT - ASHLEY VAUGHN

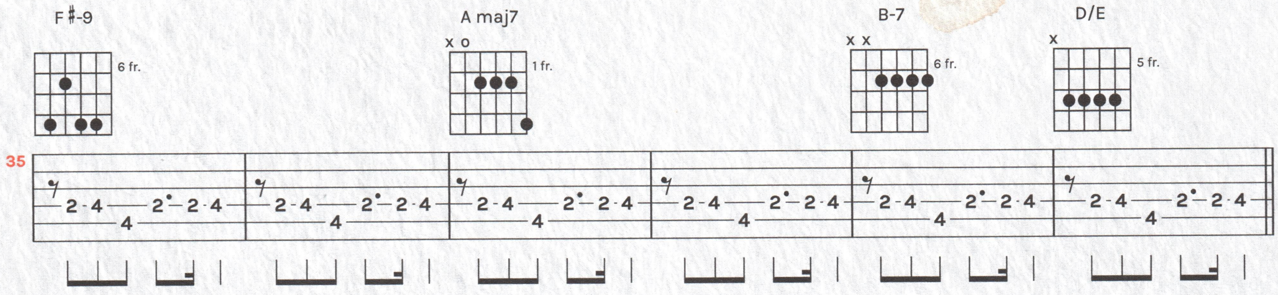

F♯-9
A maj7
B-7
D/E
19

Chorus:

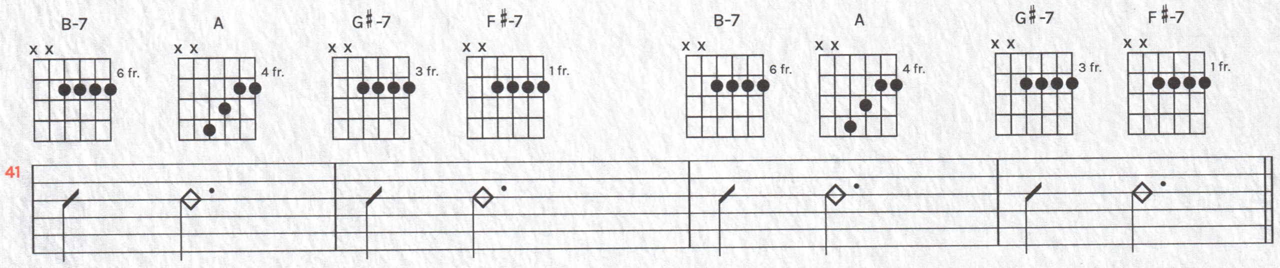

B-7
A
G♯-7
F♯-7
B-7
A
G♯-7
F♯-7
25

Rap:

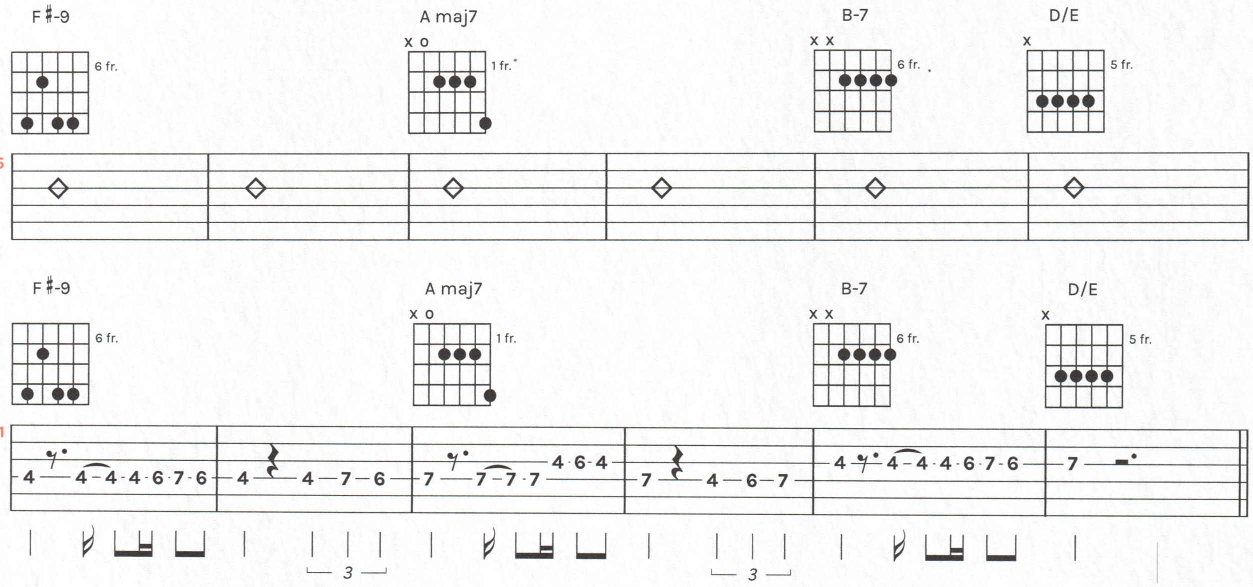

F♯-9
A maj7
B-7
D/E
29


F♯-9
A maj7
B-7
D/E
35

Chorus:

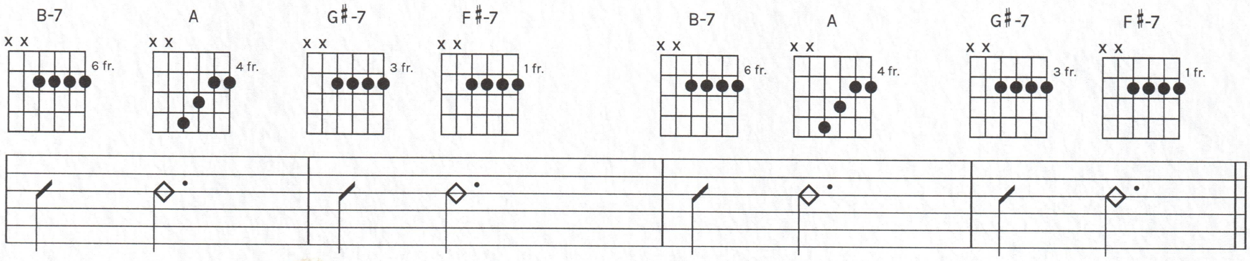

B-7
A
G♯-7
F♯-7
B-7
A
G♯-7
F♯-7
41

Bridge:



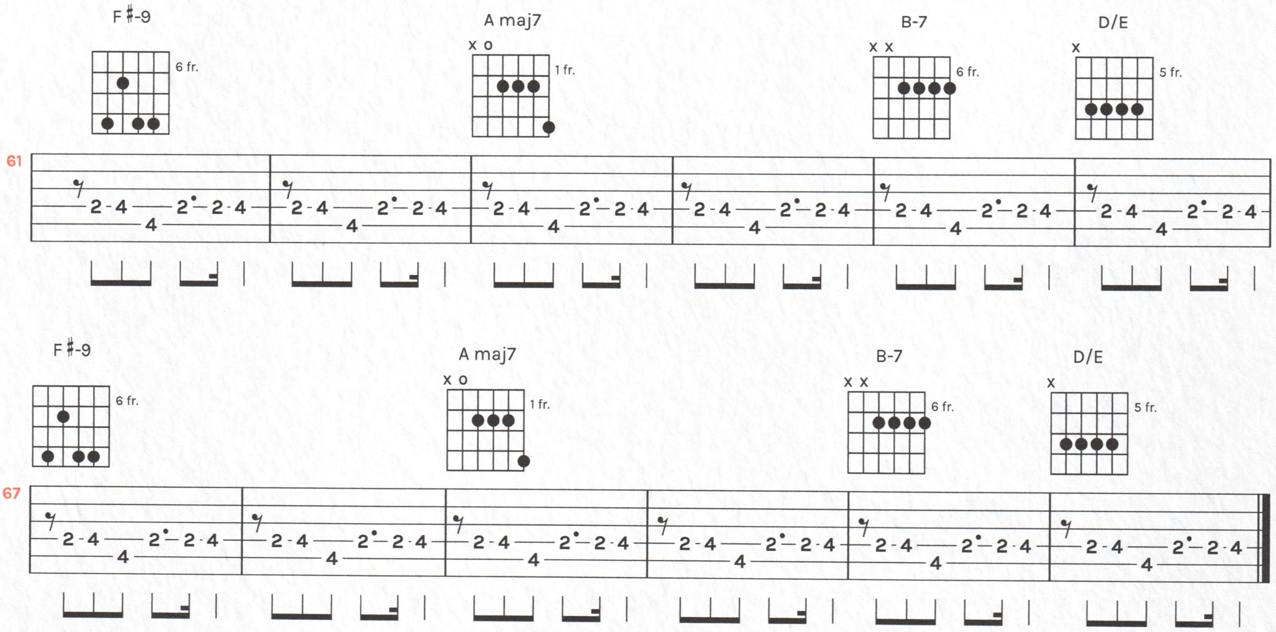
F♯-9
6 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
B-7
6 fr.
D/E
5 fr.
45
51
4 4 4 4 6 7 6
4 4 7 6
7 7 7 7 4 6 4
7 4 6 7
4 4 4 4 6 7 6
7
3
3

Chorus:



B-7
6 fr.
A
4 fr.
G♯-7
3 fr.
F♯-7
1 fr.
57

Outro:



F♯-9
6 fr.
A maj7
1 fr.
B-7
6 fr.
D/E
5 fr.
61
67
2 4 4 2 2 4

GUEST EDITOR

Hi! My name's Rachel and I currently play guitar in three bands: Shopping, Sacred Paws, and TrashKit. I play a Caribbean Mist Fender Telecaster and I don't tend to use any guitar pedals.

As a guest editor, I wanted to share a few pages from my zine, *DIY Guitar for Beginners*, because it was largely inspired by the She Shreds mission. Since 2017, I've been facilitating women and non-binary-focused guitar workshops in London and in my hometown Glasgow, and I recently made this zine to accompany those sessions. As a self-taught guitarist, I feel ambivalent about being a "teacher"; instead, I just want to suggest to people that they can probably already play way more than they think they can. There is loads of power in not knowing "how to play," and that exciting "beginner" moment can often be when you have your best ideas. I like to emphasis the importance of mess and noise and how that can lead to really unique and immediate ways of playing.

One workshop I facilitated was called Decolonising The Guitar, because I think it's so important to deconstruct all the internalised heaviness that surrounds the canon of Western rock music. I often wonder if the overwhelming whiteness of most guitar magazines was what kept me feeling shut out of that world as a brown kid growing up in rural England. I've always loved roots and folk music from around the world, so I definitely used that as a way into writing my own songs, and it's still crucial to my playing today. Letting any white dude tell you you're playing "wrong" is ridiculous, especially when you start to think about how our ancestors were playing all kinds of African banjos, and how people of color literally invented rock and roll. Really, the possibilities are endless!

Reviewing *A People's History of Gauche* was a no-brainer for me because, having toured with Gauche and affiliated bands (Priests and Downtown Boys) countless times, they are essentially family. Back in 2016, when Shopping first went on the road with Gauche in the United States, there was a genuine feeling of being a part of a musical family that I got from that tour, which these days can be pretty hard to maintain when more commercial atmospheres make meeting other bands feel standoffish or competitive. It felt very clear from the start that Gauche are my people, and if you haven't started your first band yet, I can promise you it's worth it for this feeling alone!

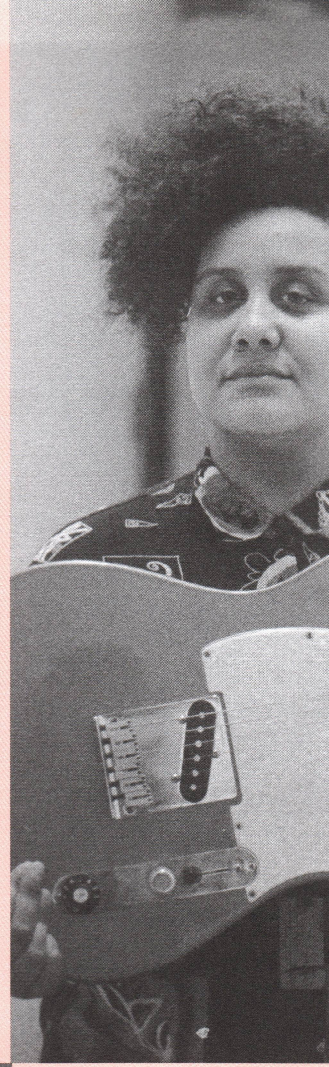
Rachel Aggs
Guest Editor

Rachel’s Guitar

1993 Fender Telecaster
in Caribbean Mist
USED: $800.00 - $1600.00

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe
MSRP: $799.99

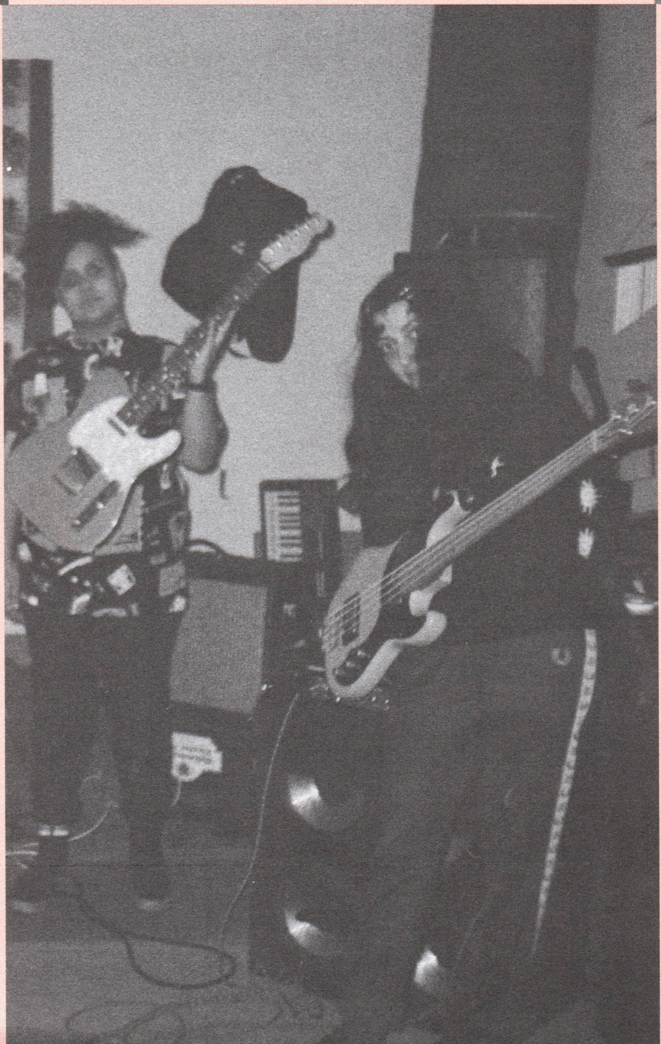
Boss TU-3 Chromatic Tuner
MSRP: $99.99



SOUND CONTROL

Sacred Paws

PHOTOS - EOIN CAREY



Moema’

Fender Telecast
with Custom Hu
MSRP:
(WITHOUT CUS

Fender Hot
MSRP:

Hartke LH5
Bass
MSRP:

Boss TU-3 C
MSRP:

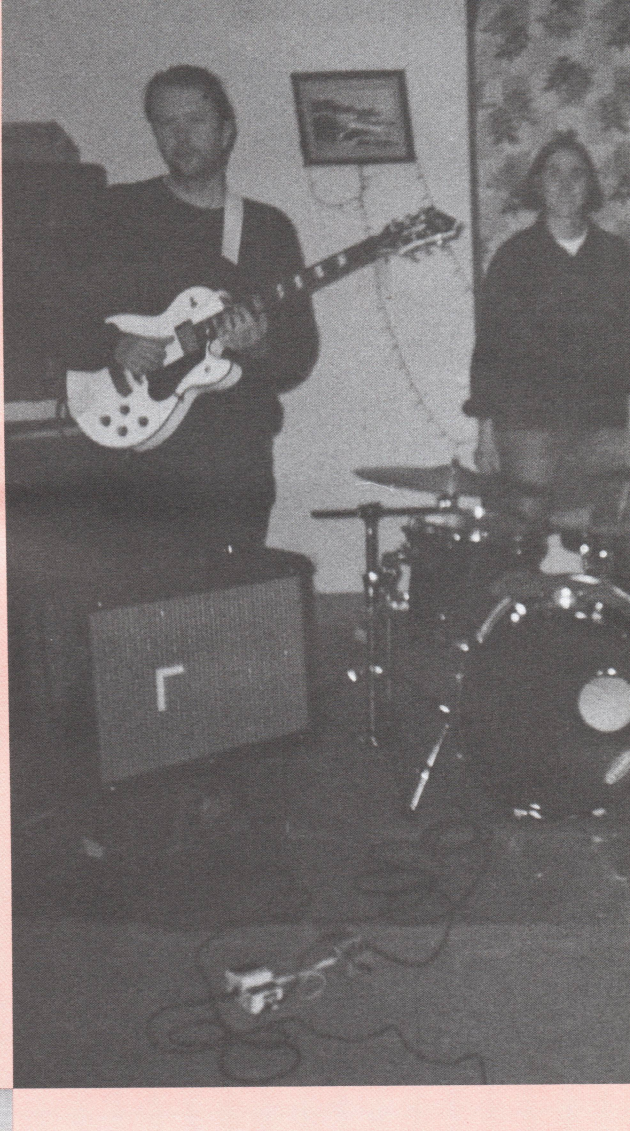
Jack's Guitar

2007 Hagstrom Swede
USED: $399.99 - $600.00

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe
MSRP: $799.99

Boss FZ-5 Fuzz
MSRP: $99.99

Boss TU-3 Chromatic Tuner
MSRP: $99.99



s Guitar

Precision Bass
bucker Pickups
74.99
OM PICKUPS)

Rod Deluxe
799.99

0 500-Watt
ead
468.99

omatic Tuner
49.99

Eilidh's Drums

Paiste Formula 602 Hi Hats 15"
MSRP: $1000.00

Zildjian A Custom Crash Cymbal 19"
MSRP: $309.95

Zildjian K Custom Dark Ride Cymbal 20"
MSRP: $384.95

Pearl Export Standard Series 5-Piece Drum Set
MSRP: $699.00

Pearl Sensitone Brass Snare Drum
MSRP: $567.99

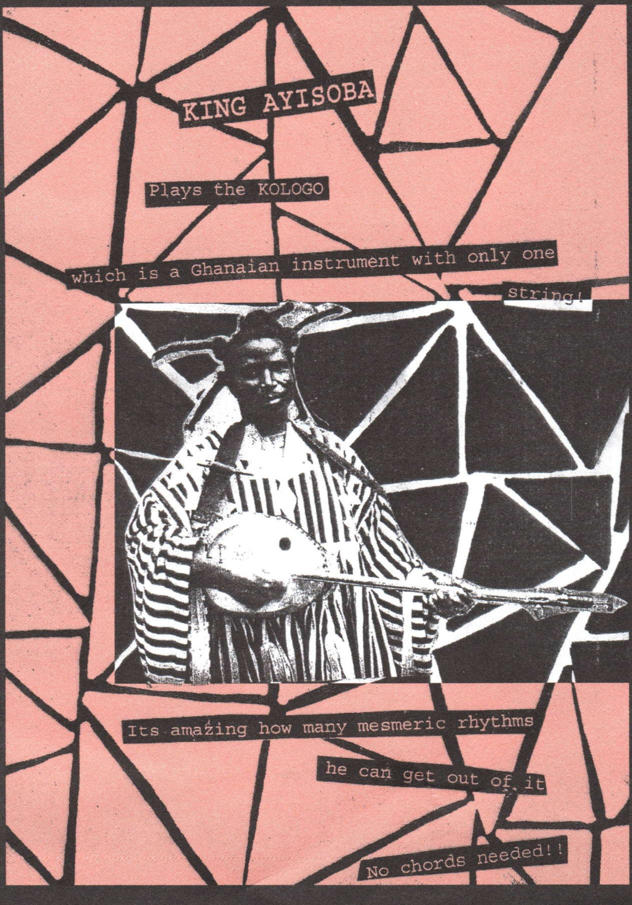
RACHEL'S GUITAR TRICKS AND PICKS

Review

Gauche | A People's History of Gauche
Merge Records, July 12, 2019

Gauche writes confrontational pop songs about work, capitalism, societal pressures, existential angst, and colonialism—all with spiky guitars and hot sax. There is a truly wild feeling of freedom to it that, despite the worry in the lyrics, really lifts the soul and inspires you to keep going. They capture what is best about music made by queers, women, and people of colour, who the industry might try to call "outsiders" or "non-musicians." While also being fiercely good at their instruments, there's an openness of spirit and a way of listening and collaborating on this record that is very rare, perhaps a result from not having the ego that comes with too much privilege. The way Gauche switch lead vocals and instruments feels very intentional, like no one wants to hold on to any one space in the band too possessively. That dynamic forces a totally new type of alchemy on almost every song.

Legend Pick's



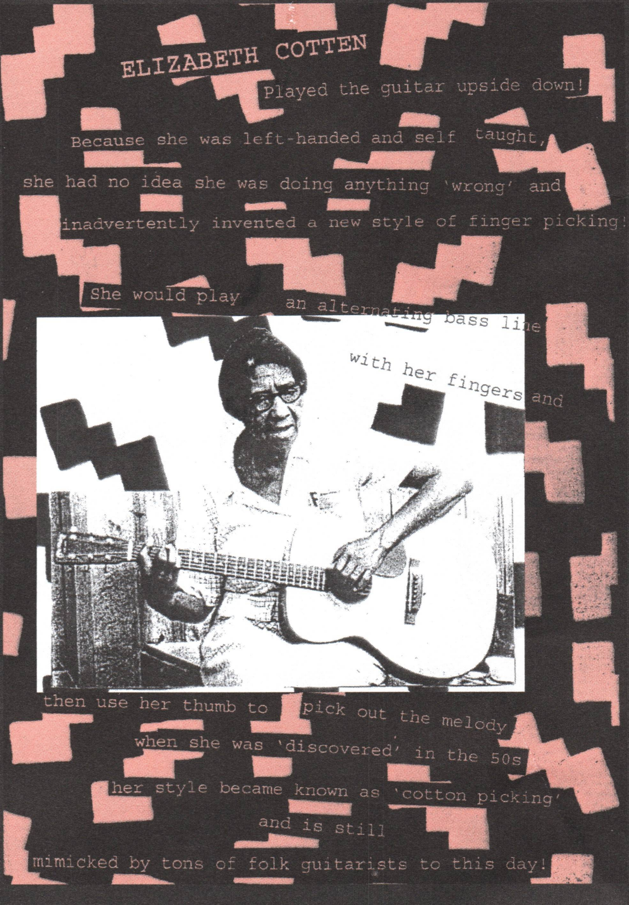
KING AYISOBA

Plays the KOLOGO

which is a Ghanaian instrument with only one string!

Its amazing how many mesmeric rhythms he can get out of it

No chords needed!!



ELIZABETH COTTEN

Played the guitar upside down!

Because she was left-handed and self taught,

she had no idea she was doing anything 'wrong' and

inadvertently invented a new style of finger picking!

She would play an alternating bass line

with her fingers and

then use her thumb to pick out the melody

when she was 'discovered' in the 50s

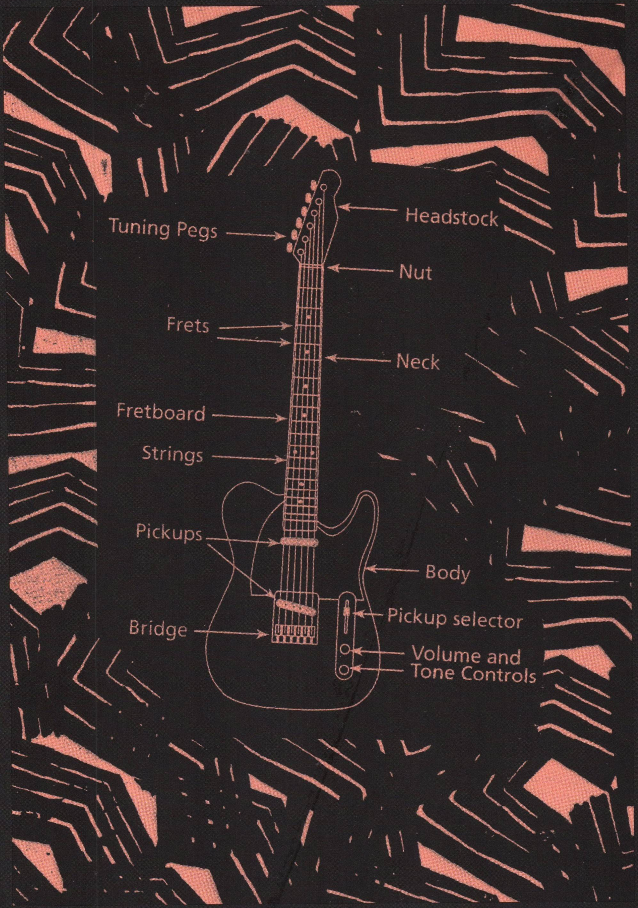
her style became known as 'cotton picking'

and is still

mimicked by tons of folk guitarists to this day!

TEXT AND ZINE - RACHEL AGGS

Guitar Anatomy



Headstock - the section of the guitar attached to the top of the neck that houses the pegs or mechanism that holds the strings.

Tuning Pegs - part of the headstock around which the strings are wrapped and tuned.

Frets - the raised metals strips across the fretboard on a bass or guitar.

Fretboard - a thin, long strip of dark hardwood on the surface of the neck where the fret bars are placed. The strings run over the fretboard and are pushed down to change the vibrating length, changing the pitch.

Pickups - electromagnets that are located on the front of the body. They produce a magnetic field that is disturbed by vibrations in the air (caused by the strings) which in turn alters the signal that is sent through a cable to the amp. The amp then receives the signal and amplifies it. There are two types of pickups: single coil and double coil.

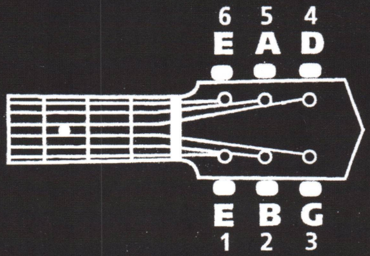
Bridge - a device on the lower body of a guitar that supports and raises the strings off the fretboard.

Tuning by Ear

How do you know if a string is out of tune?

Tuning by ear: you can play the same note on the adjacent string and see if it matches - if they sound weird together then one of them is out of tune.

Notice that the top and bottom strings are both E. You can pluck them together to see if they match.



TUNING PEGS	To Make Your Note Lower	To Make Your Note Higher
TURN PEGS ON TOP ROW (E, A & D strings)	CLOCKWISE	ANTI-CLOCKWISE
TURN PEGS ON BOTTOM ROW (G, B & E strings)	ANTI-CLOCKWISE	CLOCKWISE

	E	A	D	G	B	E
STRING	6	5	4	3	2	1

WITHIN THESE PAGES OF

She Shreds

IS A SPACE THAT IS
SAFE AND INVITING TO

All musical
expressions,
identities,
and abilities.

THERE ARE NO PRECONCEIVED
EXPECTATIONS OR ASSUMPTIONS
ON WHAT TALKING ABOUT GEAR
AND MUSIC OR PLAYING GUITAR
SHOULD LOOK AND/OR SOUND LIKE.

We, as a
community,

CAN PROMOTE THE INCLUSIVITY
OF DISCUSSING THESE TOPICS.
IN WHATEVER LANGUAGE

we choose

SHE SHREDS
The Magazine Dedicated to Women Guitarists & Bassists
ISSUE 18 · AUGUST 2019